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The Metaphysics of Balzac

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THE METAPHYSICS OF BALZAC

AS FOUND IN

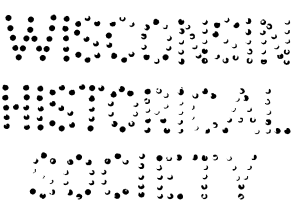
"The Magic Skin," "Louis Lambert,"

AND

"Seraphita"

BY

URSULA N. GESTEFELD



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PREFACE.

All existence is interpretation. As living human beings we are interpreters of our own nature through experience of its possibilities. Confronted first by its depths, we are attracted to its heights through the drawing power of our ideals, a power that impels us upward, however strong the gravity of our sensuous nature. What is natural is succeeded by what is possible.

It is this order, necessity, and result that is portrayed by Balzac in the books under consideration. Their language is the language of Humanity on its way out of the slough of Animality onward to Divinity—the crown of glory that is destiny accomplished. Read with the intellect, they will be valued as the work of a literary genius; read with the soul, they will be appreciated as the work of a seer. Nature, our relation to Nature, and the possibilities enfolded in this relation, possibilities that begin with her servant and end only with her master, are sketched by his hand according to the illumination in his soul that revealed them. What is written from illumination must needs be read in the same light, though it be

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but a candle-beam in comparison with the brilliant intellect that we feed with the oil of ambition.

These chapters were first written as aids to pupils who were seeking an understanding of life, a head and heart apprehension that should lead in time to that comprehension that makes him, who knows, the master of fate. They may find a field wider than that first intended, inasmuch as every member of the human family is attending the school wherein he is the student of his own nature and—at first unwittingly—the fulfiller of his own destiny. In the hope that they may help to stimulate desire and search for meanings as well as things, for values as well as objects, and transfer worship from the temporal to the more enduring, through the lifting up of our ideals, they are given to the larger class, after having fulfilled their mission for the smaller one for which they were first prepared.

URSULA N. GESTEFELD.

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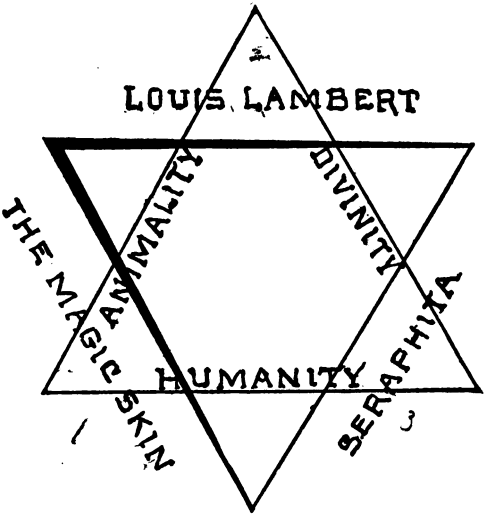

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INTRODUCTION.

Honoré de Balzac, born in 1799 and dying in 1858, was one of the giants of French literature. Working for many years in poverty and obscurity, he attained, finally, both fortune and renown. His was one of the few, perhaps too few, instances of appreciation of an author and his work while the worker is still in the world; the rule of "stones for the living, palms for the dead" being more universally applicable.

And yet, the critical student of 1898, the searcher, rather than the reader, is probably more appreciative of Balzac's work, than the average reader of 1832. Fiction without, philosophy within. Such is the nature of his chief works, which, read merely as novels, fail to yield their strength.

To-day the seeker for hidden treasure, the one who views the story, admirable though it may be, as the surface ore indicative of the richer deposit below, finds a mine of knowledge that richly repays the working; and that proves that Balzac had a steady controlling purpose of which he never lost sight; a purpose stated by the mouth of Louis Lambert, who is made to say, "I sought the deduction of a general

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system. My thought has always been to determine the actual relations between man and God."

Like many others, Balzac, incapable of the intellectual dishonesty involved in the acceptation of religious dogma as infallible truth, sought for a philosophical science instead. Endeavoring to follow the sequence of cause and effect, rather than the "traditions of the elders," he attempted this deduction of a general system which he has embodied in the three books under consideration.

In studying and analysing them we find the boldness and vigor, the positive individuality of one who is bent upon finding and knowing the truth for himself; and who, consequently, so far from failing in reverence for the good and the true, is so inspired with reverence as to be free from superstitious fear and to be filled with the divine intoxication afforded by Truth's unveiled face. He not only portrays human nature in all its phases, good and bad alike, but he shows why it is as it is; and he leads the reader *through* all these temporary phases to that grand culmination which is eternal, and necessitated by man's enduring relation to God.

Dying as he did at the height of his fame and realization of his dearest wishes—for wealth had supplanted his poverty, he had married the woman of his choice and gained the beautiful home which was his cherished ideal when he lived in his garret—it might seem that this fate was unjust, did we not feel that it

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was not the termination of his career, but only the point where it took on a higher phase. For true it is that a man's works live after him, that the perpetuity of the message, rather than of the messenger, keeps him more truly living when he is dead. The vitality of Balzac's books—as of all enduring works—is the invisible soul that uttered itself in the visible words penned by the material hand. When the soul of the reader responds to the soul of the writer, he "being dead, yet speaketh."

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THE MAGIC SKIN.

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THE MAGIC SKIN.

Among Balzac's works these books, "The Magic Skin," "Louis Lambert," and "Seraphita," constitute a triad in which is found the definite and striking continuity illustrative of his philosophical science or "general system." In George Frederick Parsons's introduction to the first work, he thus defines Balzac's intention: "He proposed to analyse society as the great philosophical anatomist had analysed the zoological kingdom, and to explain the difference between classes of men and women demonstrating the influence of environment in modifying a common humanity. . . . He did not regard himself as a writer of romances, but as a social historian. . . . After having accumulated the material for a real history of society in the nineteenth century, 'Ought I not,' he says of himself, 'to study the reasons or the reason of these social effects, and, if possible, surprise the hidden meaning in this immense assemblage of figures, passions, and events? Finally after having sought, I do not say found, this social motor, is it not necessary to mediate the principles of nature, and ascertain in what society departs from, or approaches to, the eternal law of Truth and Beauty?'"

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Balzac planned a great work as the "Comédie Humaine," which was to be romance without and philosophy within, and whose spirit, therefore, was to far transcend its letter. Where the lesser was to entertain and be forgotten, possibly, with the interest which gathered it up and passed beyond it, the greater was to penetrate to and lay hold upon those deeper emotions which make us pause in the rush and whirl of existence to ask, "Why? Whence? Whither?"

Mr. Parsons says of him further, "Having accomplished this great labor," which we gather "was to show society its own image, as exactly and completely as possible, neither extenuating anything nor setting down aught in malice," "he intended to crown his work by a series of philosophical and analytical studies which should lead up to the establishment of certain principles tending to facilitate the evolution of a higher civilization. He did not live to accomplish this division of his enterprise, but the 'Philosophical Studies,' of which 'The Magic Skin' forms the first, embody the main conceptions which were to have been developed in the 'uncompleted series.'"

Here we have agreement with the conclusion inevitably reached by the careful student of this triad, that these three stories—if we call them such—are but the means Balzac has employed of illustrating the nature of the genus, Man, and the order of its development—of the production of its species. For the evolution of a higher civilization must be in accordance

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with fundamental principles which demand recognition and co-operation.

Balzac was not a pessimist; he believed in human progress. He says, "Man is neither good nor bad. He is formed with instincts and aptitudes. Self-interest develops evil tendencies in him."

Balzac was a mystic, though his mysticism would, in his day, have remained undetected by the average reader of this triad, with the exception possibly of "Seraphita," which is a reason, perhaps, why his works are attracting now more general interest and analytical thought. The close of the nineteenth century witnesses a growing attraction in mysticism, as if an illuminating wave from the unknown had flowed in upon and impregnated sleeping souls with its subtle fire.

As a seer, possessing spiritual insight and intuition, Balzac saw and knew the three-fold man, the eternal triad, and the equally three-fold order of his development. The interlaced triangles are the geometrical figure which illustrates the inner meaning—the vitality—of these books. The conformity is perfect and is proof of his recognition of an eternal necessity—that the evolution of a higher civilization must be in accordance with the fixed principles of man's being; and that the greatest service the seer and the thinker can render mankind is to present these principles and this necessity in such form as is adaptable to its present status in that evolution, even while that form

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must necessarily cover much that awaits a higher development.

His clearness of vision and power of analysis are masterly. He draws with a firm, strong hand the large lines that present the eternal pattern, while he lacks none of the suggestiveness that supplies the delicate shadings necessary for completeness. He depicts no less vividly the limitations of the species, portraying the details involved in the pattern or genus and the relatively between them so forcibly as to make his characters and incidents well-nigh objective facts to ourselves.

The three books under consideration illustrate the natural order of the development of the soul, or the self, of Primal Man, according to the law of being. In "The Magic Skin" we have the lower human soul which includes the animal soul; in "Louis Lambert," the higher human which is becoming detached from the lower; and in "Seraphita," the divine soul whose home is above the things of sense to which it is almost a stranger. This division or qualification of the soul according to the genus, these three souls in one soul, does not originate with Balzac, but is discerned and followed by him, not as an outcome of his philosophy, but as the fixed point from and according to which that philosophy is evolved. Nowhere is the keen insight which makes him a seer more clearly shown; and with this discovery one is prepared for the intuition which finds and hands down to others

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knowledge of what, to them, are "hidden mysteries"; a work always devolving upon the few who in their own day are misunderstood and unappreciated by the many.

Some hold upon these fixed principles is necessary for the reader if he would find and follow to its logical consequence Balzac's philosophy. They are the most definitely stated in "Louis Lambert," and in the concise, clear-cut form which appeals to the student who can see and understand, though appearing probably arbitrary, involved, and elusive to the superficial reader, who may well believe them to be what the story itself makes them—only utterances of insanity.

Balzac saw that Animality, Humanity, and Divinity were enfolded in the genus, Man; and that they were unfolded or evolved as soul or self-consciousness. He saw the present of the human race, but he also saw the past and present potentialities which are to make the higher future. From the heights of seership he viewed its slow but steady progress out of and away from captivity to its own animal propensities, traced its sometimes circling but always forward march toward its highest attainment—Divinity. He saw the struggles of an infant humanity to resist the attraction of the lower nature and yield to that of the higher; the distortions of the human soul resulting from non-success; the death of the power to enjoy through unlimited opportunity for enjoyment, when

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enjoyment concerned the sensuous and intellectual natures only; the ever-increasing capacity when it was the unfolding of the divine in the soul. All this he has outlined in these three books; and, as in a mirror, the student sees himself, dissected and analysed. Recognizing the individual as the epitome of the whole, the world itself, with its light and shade, its sores, scars, and saviors, lies bare before him.

In Raphael de Valentine, the leading character in "The Magic Skin," we have that embodiment of the animal soul and strong intellectuality which give the lesser human soul that is capable of rising to and revelling in the intellectual world, or of sinking to and wallowing in the sensual world, and with equal facility. The tendency to excess is part of his nature, and the sharp contrasts of his life portray the vibrations of the soul between this above and that below. The bondage of superstition—which is sure for this grade of soul, however the intellect may scoff at it—is illustrated by the talisman and Raphael's subjection to its power. Throughout the book is traced the inevitableness of cause and effect, the stern inflexibility of that great teacher, experience.

Viewing the panorama as it unrolls before us, we look into the depths of our own souls, detect hitherto unrecognized impulses and motives for action, desires and efforts to realize them, which we shrink from acknowledging even to ourselves, unworthy ambitions which the same teacher has flung back to us while

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we have shed the tears of disappointment and pain—unmerited, as we have believed.

The artificiality of our boasted civilization, as revealed in that veneered and venerated sham, Society; the impossibility, owing to its false basis, of infusing it with a living and real quality, is portrayed so realistically as to rouse our pity for those worshippers who cover its corpse-like impassiveness with the garlands of devotion and fidelity. All these notes are struck with reiterated persistency throughout the book, and all the chords of which they are capable sound in our ears, their major and minor tones awaking haunting echoes within us.

The necessity of equilibrium, of self-poise, through recognition and grasp of our own resources; the just balance of one resource, with its possibilities, against another; the rounded and even development of our natures by conformity to their great and eternal plan, is illustrated by the consequences of excess in any one direction—the sometime violent reaction which transfers the excess to some other plane.

As the story opens, Raphael is found as a young man of twenty-five in whose face "darkness and light, annihilation and existence, struggled together." The key to his present and future conditions is found in the story of his life up to that age, as he tells it later on to a friend.

Leaving school at the age of seventeen, he lives a life of severe discipline, to which he is subjected by

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his father, and which gives him no opportunity for the exercise of his individuality. All expression of emotion is checked and driven back by his father's austerity. The consequence was a certain "libertinism of the mind," a storing up in the within of desires, and of their imaginary gratification, which was sure at some time to rush forth as a torrent if the opportunity for realization was not dominated by a steady controlling purpose. At his father's death he is left with but a meagre sum, to face his future alone. His father's rigor has destroyed his self-confidence, and he feels helpless even while inward revelations and promptings make him believe himself destined to do great things.

Longing for love, alone and lonely, he forms the resolution to reduce his existence to its actual needs, and by this means make the little money he has serve him three years, during which he would study, and write and produce a work which should compel the recognition of his genius.

Here Balzac has sketched with a masterly hand the life lived in the world of ideas as contrasted with life in the world of the senses; as also the intensified imagination of the vigorous but repressed sensuous nature that is aided by unusual intellectuality.

While living outwardly the life of the ascetic, as he writes his "Theory of the Will," Raphael inwardly, or in imagination, is revelling in all the delights of the man of the world, developing at the same time an

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intense egotism and unconscious selfishness. Note the suggestiveness of his utterance as he says, "What becomes of virtue during such excursions when thought overleaps all barriers?"

During his life in the garret he meets a young man who endeavors to make him see that modesty in a man of genius is a mistake. And here is one of Balzac's most faithful pictures—faithful to that lifeless actuality, Society, which is so far below that living glowing reality, the Ideal. "Push, and society will make room for you; brag, and it will believe you; make debts, and other people will pay them. Know the secret springs of society and work them to your own profit. If you have talent, make your success personal for yourself; it is the surest way. Please those who can trumpet you along. You can yourself make the fortune of your theory by thoroughly understanding the theory of fortune."

We need not study Balzac to see and know that this "theory of fortune" is well understood in our own day, not by men alone, but by women as well. For the business, political, and social worlds are closely allied beneath the surface, however wide the apparent divisions; and the first requisite for success in either, according to a tacitly accepted, though disguised, standard, is "push"; a quality possessed in fullest measure by those who can intentionally, and for personal ends, cultivate selfishness.

The business man pushes his competitor to the

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wall and strides past him without mercy. The politician knocks down and steps upon his opponent if he can mount by means of him. To say that "lovely woman," in her efforts for social recognition and supremacy, uses the same methods, would be to call forth a storm of protest, perhaps. A man's fist is a brutal weapon, yet its wounds are but surface bruises to the deep thrusts so quickly and cleverly inflicted by the woman who wages war on all that stands between her and her family's success, and whose battlefield is Society. Selfishness is her armor—must necessarily be the armor behind which she gives and takes blows whose sting is not soon forgotten. Some time her armor becomes so battered it is more vulnerable: and in sorrow and bitter tears she will learn that the prize for which she has fought is but Dead Sea fruit—but a will-o'-the-wisp which has lured her on till her feet are fast in the bog of loneliness, disappointment, and sorrow.

Falling in love, in his poverty, with a rich and beautiful woman who suffers him as long as he does not annoy her, and who scorns him when that time comes, Raphael is loved in turn by a young girl, nearly as poor as himself, whose devotion he unappreciatively accepts, blinded by his infatuation for the other. In despair, his last coin lost at the gaming-table, he is resolved to commit suicide by drowning. While waiting for darkness to conceal the deed, he wanders into an antiquary's shop.

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Here Balzac draws a wonderful picture. As we read it seems as if every country in the world was represented to us by means of the objects that crowd the rooms; as if all the far-reaching tributaries of this planet had poured their wealth into one receptacle, thus condensing its nature in a great object-lesson illustrative of the whole.

Is it too much to assume that the author has here furnished an illustration of the possibilities of human life waiting the touch of the divine fire of the higher soul that shall infuse them with a new vitality, and bring forth order, or harmonious relativity, from the picturesque but chaotic confusion? — that touch which enables us to look through the confusion, as well as look upon it, and penetrate to that central thread upon which are strung the beads of existence?

Hear him as he says, "This ocean of inventions, fashions, handicrafts, results, and ruins, were to the stranger a poem without an end. Forms, colors, thoughts were resurrected, but nothing complete was offered to the soul. It devolved upon the poet to finish the sketch of the great painter who had prepared this vast palette, where all the accidents of human life were flung in profusion, and as if disdainfully."

As we follow Raphael's subsequent life, it seems as if we are finding and following the plan of the "great painter," and reducing the "disdainful profusion" to

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law and order, bringing that divine completeness which encompasses the human incompleteness.

In this shop, as part of the antiquary's possessions, is found "The Magic Skin" that bears an impression of what the Orientals have called "Solomon's Seal," and which is possessed of occult properties. It will enable its possessor to gratify every wish, but at the cost of his life, for with each gratification the skin will shrink and his days lessen. Protesting his freedom from superstition, Raphael accepts the talisman, and his first wish, made as he grasped it in his hand, is gratified the same evening, almost within the hour.

In the scene of its fulfilment—the dinner at Taillefer's, the animal soul, in all its naked naturalness, is laid bare before us; and we see, without surprise, the gravitation of that quality in Raphael toward its kind. That "like attracts like" is an ever operative law, is shown not only here, but throughout the three books.

In this incident we see the excess resulting from unrestraint, the appetites and impulses, which we possess in common with the animal creation, active according to their nature, the man dethroned, the beast enthroned, the higher intellectual characteristics lost sight of altogether, or degraded to its service. That the animalism which is refined, therefore more intensified, by intellectuality, is more deadly and soul-destroying than its coarser and lower grade, is shown by the contrast between Raphael and the host of the

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evening. Taillefer is the natural animal, pure and simple. The other is the cultivated specimen capable of creating a future hell the natural one could not feel.

One side of the triangle, one part of the threefold nature, is revealed in this scene, and Balzac's description confirms the revelation. "Claude Vignon was dancing like a bear to a fife. Intimate friends were fighting. The likeness to animals that came out on those human faces . . . appeared vaguely in their gestures and in the movements of their bodies. They were an open book if only some Bichat, cool, sober, fasting, had been there to read it."

Is it true that we have within our own, as a lesser within a greater, that nature which, though natural, is gross in its tendencies? Then it is equally true that it is to be ruled and made subservient to that which is more than it. "First, the natural; afterward, the spiritual."

How magnificently has Balzac portrayed the naturalness of excess! How subtly has he indicated the way of its mastery! "The whole scene," he says, "was at once a lesson and a picture. Philosophies, religions, moralities of every latitude, governments, indeed all the great acts of human intelligence, fell under a scythe as sweeping as that of time; and an observer might have found himself puzzled to decide whether it were handled by drunken wisdom or by Drunkenness grown wise and clear-sighted. Carried

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away by a sort of whirlwind, these excited minds, like angry waves rushing at a cliff, sought to shake the laws that float civilizations, unconsciously doing the will of God, who has left good and evil within the bounds of nature, keeping for Himself alone the secret of their perpetual warfare."

Are not the laws that float civilization continually assailed by the oncoming tide of that progress which is the further development of man's fundamental nature? Are they not shaken when the practical standard of morality is a matter of latitude rather than of principle? Does not this very necessity represent the time-old battle and problem, "What are good and evil, and why are they in continual warfare?" Is it not a problem to be solved and a battle to be fought by every human soul? And is it not all contained within the bounds of nature?

Balzac discerns and represents a truth needed as a revelation by those who seek to gain the answer and win the victory—that primary good and evil is a question of Nature and not of ethics. It is a question of what is wise or unwise, a basis, which makes ethics a subsequent possibility. The old mystery, the origin of evil, is no longer mysterious when the human soul is seen in its relation to both Nature and its own inherent possibility. This dual relation is seen by Balzac, is illustrated by his characters and embodied in his work. He lifts from the soul ethical responsibility at the stage of its evolution where its relation to

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nature is the dominating phase of existence, and where this responsibility has been mistakenly placed by a dogmatic theology. He sees and affirms logical consequence in place of voluntary disobedience to an arbitrary command; a consequence natural to the whole human race, that renders theological excuses unnecessary and makes enlightenment on the nature of the human soul the remedy for all evil.

What is nature and what is man's place in and relation to it? is also his quest—a necessary corollary to the endeavor to determine the actual relations between man and God. He aims to show the true nature, place, and value of ethics as a factor in human progress, in contradistinction to that warped view which has not reckoned sufficiently with nature, and therefore fails to rise to apprehension of man's true relation to God; and he presents an atonement for evil which is voluntary instead of compulsory and is equally a fact in nature. To him the great battle between good and evil is fought outside of man only as it is fought in him; and, as what is wise and what is unwise, it is a question of what holds him back from spiritual possibilities, and what helps him forward in the ultimating of those possibilities whose type is "Seraphita."

The two women prominent in the banquet scene illustrate forcibly the grade of soul for which this banquet is an enjoyment and pleasure. One, as "the soul of vice," Aquilina, illustrates that intensity of

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passion that is mistaken for love, that smites even while it offers a caress; and which is misdirected energy operating with greater force and destructiveness in the animal capable of intellection, than in his four-footed brother; but which can be transmuted through spiritual alchemy into a saving and ennobling power which redeems and blesses where it has formerly destroyed. In the "scale of being" its color is red—Aquilina wears a red robe—the color of the lower man, the earthy Adam who is to become the heavenly Christ.

The other woman is the embodiment of that utter selfishness which has never a thought but for self-enjoyment; that cold, bloodless gratification unredeemed by an atom of feeling for others; that annihilation of all that gives incentive to higher endeavor, which is "vice without a soul."

The course of both is downward according to natural gravitation, downward to that death for which there is no resurrection for Émile; for resurrection is of the heart, and she has absolutely none. She is the same type as Fedora, but below the plane of respectability, on which Fedora moves serenely, and appearing as vicious selfishness in contrast to the coldly calculating, outwardly respectable heartlessness whose embodiment is Society.

Man seeing himself in woman, or what woman is to him on the differing planes of soul, is shown by Balzac in the women characters of these three books.

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As notes in the scale of being, one after the other, from Émile to Seraphita, gives forth its tone as it is struck by the author's all-compelling touch. The utter darkness, the twilight, and the glorious illumination of the soul succeed each other till the grand chord of assured and eternal victory over the sensuous nature is sounded. Awed and enraptured, we listen to it with Seraphita as it swells around and above us, rising higher and higher to those celestial realms where we cannot yet follow, but from whence comes to us the far-off echo which we cherish in our heart of hearts.

If the Fedora in this book is an illustration of Society—and it would seem as if Mr. Parsons is correct in his view—what a marvellous satire upon the cold unappreciativeness of that marble goddess for the pulsating, burning soul, that, though bare of the medium of exchange which is the current coin of her world—money—strives to come into it and infuse it with even a little of its own thrilling life! The ring of the current coin of the inner world, ideas, with the noble emotions they engender, falls upon ears deaf in the main, which respond only when a new attraction can increase her own glory.

Society forswears thinking for sensation. "She remained silent," says Raphael, "when I told her that ideas were organized and perfected beings living in a world invisible."

His "Theory of the Will," which he had evolved

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in the seclusion of his garret, that product of his own early manhood offered up as a sacrifice to be coined into ideas, "amused her," and brought him great reward—"an invitation to visit her again; permission to continue his visits" till he tired her, and was dismissed as incapable of rousing in her any new sensation.

Remembering Raphael's intoxication of imagination in his garret, we see that he then created subjectively, by his thoughts, what he afterward actualized with his experience. That this connection between our precedent thinking and our subsequent experience is a fact, Balzac's metaphysics, equally with those of our own day, teach. He saw Thought as the Creative Energy which was directed by the Will, and recognized the consequences both of its trained and wise use, and of its ignorant abuse. He saw it as both destructive and constructive, and both consequences are graphically portrayed in these three books.

It is no wonder they were not understood in the day in which they were written. The wave of deeper insight which is moving forward at the close of the nineteenth century, enables many to see that to which they also would have been blind even ten years ago; for the power of trained and directed thinking as an avenue for the operation of the Universal Thought Energy, is being demonstrated more and more. The claim that it can be thus employed for the betterment of all conditions has passed the stage of superficial

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criticism and ridicule, and is commanding respectful attention.

In Raphael is illustrated two kinds of excess, both fatal to the normal and rounded growth of the soul—the excess of sensualism and the excess of intellectualism, which inevitably must produce an all-absorbing, instead of an all-giving personality. His egotistical selfishness is colossal. He seeks to draw all to himself and give nothing. Even the work to which he so long devotes himself is to be given to the world, not that the world may be helped thereby, he content, if need be, to remain unknown, but that it shall redound to his own glory and compel recognition of its author at his own valuation—which is the animal instinct of gratification and appropriation appearing on the intellectual plane.

Here is illustrated another form of selfishness—that of pure intellectualism; the thinking which is solely from the head, into which the heart does not enter. It is research and knowledge for the enjoyment of their pursuit and possession. It ossifies the heart and produces the egotist who will give of his store only at the price of fame for himself.

Through Pauline, the tender unselfishness of the truly loving woman, the give all and exact nothing, that is possible only when self is forgotten, is thrown into bold relief by contrast with Fedora and her impassiveness on the one hand, and Raphael and his egotism on the other. As in the great plan of the

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divine Architect, these shadows but compel us to see that which can alone survive as the fittest in this struggle with our lesser selves which we call existence.

The blessedness of giving for its own sake is beautifully portrayed, as well as the patience that can wait, however long, for recognition. The lawful little deceptions by which Pauline enables her loved one to accept assistance without sacrifice to his pride, the never-ceasing watchfulness which not only enables her to give, but also provides the means by which she gives, touch the heart with a profound emotion, as if a veil had been lifted, affording a glimpse of holy virgin motherhood.

This idea, the virginity of motherhood, foreign perhaps to the artificial sentiment of modern society, is carried through the triad. We see it in the faithful devotion and protection given to Louis Lambert, in the firm yet tender guidance of Seraphita. It is a revelation of the Divine, that with the patience of infinity waits for fruitage. The woman who loves with the higher love will inevitably be mother as well as wife to him she loves. The wifely office includes the other. Her husband is her child, to be brought up and out into the divine likeness; a result which can never be reached by the masculine nature without the help of the feminine. She is the necessary "help-meet" for the growing soul, for as she is overshadowed by the divine, even so does she overshadow her mate, who is to be reborn through her virginity.

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It is the woman nature, whether it be found with male or female physical form, that is capable of selfless love and an unswerving fidelity to divine ideals. This it is to be like God. Therefore is she the ever-virgin mother of whom regenerate man is to be born. Therefore do the temporal sufferings of her wifehood constitute the birth-pangs of her motherhood; and though her husband be a Cain, as her child he may become a Saviour.

In this sharp contrast afforded by Fedora and Pauline, light and darkness, warmth and cold strive the one with the other. A word of wonderful suggestiveness is spoken by Raphael as he tells his story to his friend and companion at the banquet. "Women without souls have nothing mellow in their gestures." Do we not see at once the artificiality of the society devotee which chills, nay, freezes, the spontaneous naturalness of the soul, and congeals all true sentiment?—an artificiality that is accepted, even demanded, in place of sincerity, by the requirements of "good society"?

Balzac has but emphasized what we with a clear vision may see—the frozen soul of the woman who makes society the object of her devotion. Nothing that is perfectly sincere and natural can be left to her. Her very love for her husband and children will be touched with the same frost and become inseparable from expediency. Every thought of them will be tinctured with the social ambition that will color and

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distort the sweetest relationships, and too often make victims of those whose right it is to be cherished.

The social highway is lined with altars whose smoke of sacrifice never goes out, and the slain offerings are thickly strewn upon the road pressed by the feet of those who march over them in their eagerness to serve the goddess of selfishness.

Excess wears many faces. This disposition of the lesser human soul consequent upon the animal instincts within it, prevails also upon the intellectual plane until the higher human begins to develop and establish equilibrium. Selfishness and the intellectual egotist are found together. His love, his passionate, intense love, is invariably a love for self—for himself in the loved one. Witness Raphael's remark at the conclusion of his story: "Let a young man meet with a woman who does not love him, or a woman who loves him too well, and his life is forever spoiled."

How forcibly does Balzac show the proneness of the undeveloped soul to believe its experiences undeserved misfortune; to look upon what others have or have not done as the cause of all its sufferings, the destroyer of its possibilities! But the higher soul, in its womanly aspect, as Pauline, looks quietly upon what it cannot hinder, and waits—ever waits while ever ready.

"Pauline stood there as my living conscience," says Raphael, as he takes leave of the humble home made radiant by her unselfish love.

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His possession of the talisman which gives him the power of gratifying every desire, also takes from him the power of enjoyment. Do we not see here that "the wages of sin is death"? that the lower soul must die that the higher soul may be resurrected? Each gratification costs him so many years of life—that life of the senses by which he sets so much store. That inexorable principle, "the survival of the fittest," holds the soul in its grasp and will not let it go except the soul blesses and accepts the stern guardian of human life.

"He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." And the reaping of Raphael, from which his "Theory of the Will" cannot save him, because it is an intellectual emotion only, follows closely and surely upon his sowing. A part of it is his inability to do a kind and generous deed to another. Even his wish for the prosperity of his old teacher, without one act of helpfulness in his behalf, robs him of some of the little life remaining to him as he sits in his luxurious home, a living corpse.

See, also, how forcibly is shown the fact that repression of desire through fear of the consequence is not the conquering of desire that gestates the higher soul. In the description of Raphael at this point, note the reference to the look in his eyes. "It was the deep and all-embracing glance of a powerless man driving his desires back into the depths of his soul," says Balzac. And again: "It was the look of a con-

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queror, and yet the look of a lost soul." Raphael was conqueror in so far as he was able to repress, no farther. That soul which does not rule, transmute, and lift up the sense-desires, is lost and cannot survive as the fittest.

Neither is that soul conqueror that simply turns from the pleasures of the senses to the pleasure of gathering knowledge for himself alone, for this is self-enjoyment still, and still it is the ruling motive. Here the old antiquary is illustration. He forswore the delights of youth, only to turn to them when his age mocked at him and his treasures of knowledge lost their charm. Some time the balance must be struck, the soul must settle accounts with itself. The point of equilibrium, of self-poise, in the continuity of self-consciousness must be reached.

But it is not attained while love includes the animal desire of possession. When Raphael first meets Pauline after their long separation, and only his higher sentiments are roused by the meeting, the talisman does not shrink because of them. When he wishes to be loved by Pauline because the higher and nobler nature forms the wish, his days are not lessened. But when his baser feelings, his desire to possess her, become active at a subsequent meeting, his wish is fatal and his own death-warrant stares him in the face.

Here we see what motive has to do with result. When the motive is pure, the result—though containing an element of suffering when ignorantly

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reached—shall "be counted unto us for righteousness." Persistence of right motive, however lacking we may be in present knowledge, brings us continually and surely nearer to that self-dominion and selfless love which is God's kingdom come. Our days are increased instead of lessened, for we are ascending to the unlimited and eternal instead of descending to the limited and temporal.

Raphael's attempt to be rid of the talisman, and refusal to believe longer in its power to shorten his promised happiness, its finding its way back to him after he has thrown it into the well, and his subsequent efforts to destroy it, illustrate the impossibility of breaking asunder that great law, Cause and Effect; as also the blindness of the lesser soul which does not see that co-operation with this law is the defeat of what that soul calls fate. Do what he would, he could not rid himself of it, for he strove to put it away from him instead of growing away from it, instead of becoming the quality of soul over which it could have no power.

God's law is the law of cause and effect. "As a man soweth, so shall he reap." From the seed sown by the soul it must gather its harvest. This law is omnipotent or overruling; and because it can be depended upon absolutely, we govern the result as absolutely—not the reaping, but what the reaping shall be to us; whether we gather the harvest as its master who saves the wheat and destroys the tares, or

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whether we reap it as the servant, toiling, hungry, weary, and suffering in the heat of the day, unable to distinguish the one from the other. The soul must and will fulfil its destiny, but it may conquer fate. The naturalness of suffering, the continuation of suffering till its cause is destroyed, is perceived and portrayed by Balzac, who teaches that nothing less than transformation in soul can bring it to an end; that the soul must either master, or be mastered.

The various scientists who by their own methods attempt the skin's destruction, an attempt that invariably fails of result, the skin remaining unchanged, illustrate the limitations of what is called scientific knowledge when it is applied to eternal things and self-operative principles. Much as it may accomplish when applied to the objects of sense, to objective facts, it can never seize and accommodate to itself deeper subjective truths. And it is a subjective truth that this talisman represents.

Raphael's experience in search of restored health and prolonged life, show the futility of seeking for them where they are not to be found. His search was always in the external; and wherever he went he carried with him the disease, its cause, and—if he had but known it—the remedy. Witness the declaration of the three physicians who consult together as to Raphael's case. "Has not a man a soul, a body, a mind? One or the other of those three first causes acts more or less powerfully within us; there will al-

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ways be a man behind all scientific convictions. Believe me, Raphael, we cannot cure; we can only aid a cure."

How forcibly does Balzac teach that the wellsprings of both good and evil are within ourselves. Is it not indeed necessary "to mediate the principles of nature and ascertain in what we depart from or approach to the eternal law of truth and beauty?"

In the natural man, the lower human soul, dwells the instinct to turn to the things of sense for help—for relief from suffering. He follows it, at first, as naturally and unconsciously as do the four-footed creatures around him. He lives in externals only. But there is also in him a divine potency which develops slowly, till it is a voice directing him to the higher. When he hears it first, not understanding either messenger or message, he fears, and buries himself yet deeper in externals. But his hours of suffering increase, and little by little he turns to the within to listen. It tells him that he has ignorantly departed from "the eternal law of truth and beauty." He has followed his natural instinct instead of his higher faculties and nature, that bide their time to serve him. If he listens long enough, without intellectual egotism, and with patience and humility, this inner teacher will "mediate" for him "those principles of nature" according to which he must work and solve the problems of his own existence. As he heeds and follows its teachings, he finds and prizes those princi-

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ples which put that existence in tune with the great key-note that has sounded in the silence ever since time began; a harmony which makes great souls, the saviors of men, mediators of the "Most High."

Again, the true inwardness of that hollow mockery, Society, is emphasized by Raphael's intuitive reading of the natures around him at the baths—the environment which is the mirror reflecting his own soul. The really superior soul, impelled by the necessities of its own individuality, lives independently of society, and does society an unforgivable wrong by "escaping beyond the jurisdiction of its mediocrity." This soul is inevitably left to the "isolation that belongs to power."

How like a flash of lightning illuminating hitherto dark places are Raphael's self-communings as he journeys to another health resort after having fought the duel! They are the revelations of experience. How clearly is seen, some time, the necessity of self-knowledge! How strong the conviction, when arrayed before the tribunal of our own souls, that power exalts none but the exalted!

His search for health is in vain. The enemy from whose grasp he has been trying to escape—his visage has been ever before him since the first fatal wish—closes its strong hand more firmly. Realizing the impossibility of escape, he returns to Paris—to his home, to find that his deserted wife has borne her lot with patient, uncomplaining fidelity, asking only—and

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only by letter, for he will not see her lest he shorten the little life remaining to him—that she may suffer with him instead of alone, anything, everything, so that this solace be hers.

Determined to be only a vegetable that he may guard the flickering flame of life even a few days longer, he refuses her request only to waken in the night and find her at his bedside. She learns for the first time the secret of his life and why he had forsaken her. Realizing on the instant that to remain with him is to destroy him, nay, more, that even to live as the object of his desire is enough, she tries to take her life, her devotion supreme to the end.

True to the type, Balzac makes Raphael try to stop her that he may still possess her, still find gratification for the animal instinct which, long suppressed, not transmuted, slays him in the endeavor; but not before he has bitten her very flesh as the last expiring effort of the beast of prey.

With his death the first line of the second triangle is completed. But already we may see, through Pauline, the bend in the onward direction, which will give us the second line. Ascension is the divine order.

Like Goethe, Balzac teaches, "It is the divine womanly that ever draws us on." He found the hidden meaning he sought and divined its ultimation.

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LOUIS LAMBERT.

This second book of the triad seems at first sight to be entirely different from "The Magic Skin"; and the reader who is not awake to the metaphysical meaning of the three, and who reads for entertainment only, will be likely to lay down the book unfinished. He will miss the excitement, the passion, the breathless rush of experiences portrayed in the other, and feel it tame in comparison. Its philosophical aspect will not attract him, and curiosity about Louis's sad fate will be the strongest interest aroused. For such a reader the tendency to "skip" will be irresistible.

For the student, however, who is tracing the unfolding of Balzac's purpose, who is finding and following the second line of the lower triangle, it is of interest to note that Balzac makes the Bible—which has had the same effect upon other and great lives—the determining influence upon Louis Lambert's career, coming to his hands when he is a very young child. He portrays him as of a reflective, meditative temperament, a boy of abnormal intellect and natural inclination to mysticism, who absorbs ideas through reading, for which he has an inveterate passion. The character of Louis as sketched further gives us the

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curious impression of one who is of extreme age while yet a boy, this mixture of age with youth preparing us unawares for the future utterances of the man that wait for later generations to be understood.

He possesses the power, nay, rather, he is conscious of possessing the power, to produce within himself and for himself *that which is*, or, as he expresses it, "the events of nature reproduce themselves in purer forms than those under which they first appeared to my exterior senses." He was one, says Balzac, "who carried all his action into thought as others put all their being into action."

Born of poor parents and attracting the attention of Mme. de Staël by a chance meeting and conversation, he is placed by her in college, that she might save him from the army and the Church and give him to the great future which she foresaw was before him because of his remarkable endowments. Their fame preceded his arrival and gave him a special standing with his fellow-pupils, one not altogether desirable, as circumstances proved, when his repeated fits of abstraction drew from his teacher the oft-repeated reprimand, "You are doing nothing, Lambert," and entailed upon him as a punishment so much copying of lines as to leave him no time for recreation.

Our attention, as we read the vivid description of life in the college, is drawn specially to a characteristic of Louis' which would serve as a key to his nature even if it were not so fully outlined by the author.

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The power of his eye, unconsciously exerted, and bringing upon him the more degrading punishment of the ferule when directed toward his teacher because of the—to Louis—undeserved reprimand, reveals the nature of the soul represented by the character and its place in the three-fold being, Man.

One who has observed the difference in the eyes of those whom one meets cannot fail to be struck with it, even if a reflective mood does not seek to account for it. Beyond all color and form is a certain something, elusive, if its description is attempted, but most positive and assertive in its effect upon the beholder—a something which in some eyes seems to be locked in slumber, in others, just on the point of awakening, and in others, again, wide awake; a something which looks directly at you; not at your features, form, or clothing, but at you, and gives the impression that it sees you clearly, do what you will to hide yourself. The penetrative power seems to pierce through any and every mask, and one and all are self-confessed as futile. It compels nakedness and dissolves disguise. It demands, and the beholder is almost irresistibly drawn to comply. And it demands without demanding—demands by virtue of what it is rather than by intention, a demand that compels obedience in greater measure.

Is it the living soul, looking out from the earthly tabernacle it uses for a time?—the living, vital, thing—yet no thing—that forever eludes the searcher of

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the tabernacle, and from that remoteness which is infinite nearness looks unmoved upon all efforts to lay hold upon and bind it? Is it the seat of that power driving the machinery of the human body which, on its other side, is belted to the Supreme? Does it know that it is not of dust, and does this innate wisdom kindle and renew the light which shines in the human eye, tiny spark in measurement, yet immeasurable in power?

As we had with Raphael the lower human soul which includes the animal soul that is exalted above its natural level by the addition of intellectuality, we have in Louis Lambert the higher human which intellectuality lifts up from the animal, transforming it, absorbing its life or essence into the higher life, and casting away the grosser parts as soul growth pushes onward. This idea, already assuming new prominence in the present day, is accentuated by Balzac in this story, and withal so subtly, yet so cleverly, as perhaps to escape the notice of the aforementioned reader, who is not looking for the metaphysics within and above the story. The bend in the line of continuity illustrating the soul, that directs it toward the divine, and therefore away from the animal, giving in the second triangle the line parallel to the base of the first, is that quality of soul illustrated by Balzac in Louis Lambert, whose higher intellectuality begins to be illumined by the radiance of the divine toward which it is travelling.

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The monotonous, and, for the boy, unnatural routine and discipline of the college but drove him into this inner radiance, the more alluring that it was his comfort and compensation for the ills of the outward life. We are in a measure prepared for his subsequent fate as we see the conspiracy of his environment to accentuate his natural tendency to the subjective rather than the objective life. In the words of Balzac, "perhaps this inward life helped him to foreknow the mysteries in which he had so much faith."

The inevitable consequence for this grade of soul, unappreciation of its quality, thoughts, and possibilities—except for the one or two who, having the torch of their own understanding already lighted from the same divine fire, are able to see its light—adds the pathetic element to Lambert's character and experience. Despised by his masters and ridiculed by his school-mates, he, with his one sympathetic friend, lived a life apart from them and in a world made real by the power of his soul, a world the others could not enter. He could not be taken by either teachers or school-mates at his own instinctive valuation; he would not be taken at theirs.

The turning of the soul inward, away from impressions through the senses to impressions from ideas, is illustrated by Louis Lambert's school life. It is the turning-point in the soul's evolution when it is the result of conscious intent. It is a preparer of the way higher, when it is the pushing of experience.

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"He was," says Balzac, "a soul enslaved." So was Raphael de Valentine, we say. How, then, is Louis an advance upon the other? Raphael was the willing slave of desire; Louis, the soul longing for freedom. "Where gifts are equal," says the author, "the feelings based upon the simpler and truer desires, truer because purer, must surpass the lamentations of genius."

"Happily for me," says Louis, "there come joyful moments when the walls of the class-room disappear and I am away—in the meadows. What delight to float upon thought as a bird upon its wing!"

At this point also belongs the use of thought instead of being used by it. Raphael was enslaved by his thought, Louis was liberated by his; and he was freed sufficiently from the bondage of his environment to find and trace toward their source the eternal things which stand immovable in all the confusion and destruction of sense actualities.

How forcibly is illustrated in his school-life the limitations of artificial standards and methods of education, that curb and confine the natural intuition that would reveal far more than can ever be learned from books; the false value placed upon books, and upon memorizing their contents!

We see at this stage of Louis' career the creative power of thought and the susceptibility of the soul to the ideas formed by thinking, together with their possible expression in the body. "If," says Louis,

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"I think strongly on the sensation the blade of my penknife would cause if thrust in my flesh, I instantly experience a sharp pain as though I had really cut myself; nothing is lacking but the flow of blood. An idea causing physical suffering! What do you think of that?" he remarks to his friend.

More sympathy for such an idea was manifested by Louis' school-friend than is expressed by many to-day when the suggestion is offered them. "The idea that thinking governs sensation! How preposterous!"

It may well appear so to those who hear the suggestion for the first time, although at the moment they make the ejaculation they are experiencing and expressing the sensation roused by the thought. There is an unthinking thinking which, though it is responsible for what we feel, is an unrecognized factor in our experience, and which will continue to impart to our experience an unpleasant and undesirable quality, till it is recognized and understood as a factor to be reckoned with; till it is mastered and displaced by a conscious and consciously directed thinking, that, impelled by a higher love, gives the soul mastery of all evil and attendant suffering.

Such a character as this boy must be so extravagant as to be almost inconceivable, were we not able to distinguish the quality of soul veiled by the childish frame. "The child, the giant," says Balzac, as he puts in the mouth of Louis' companion the following words: "We tried to decipher within ourselves the

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indescribable phenomena relating to the generation of thought, which Lambert hoped to catch in all its developments, so as to reveal the mysterious process at some future day. After such discussions, mingled as they often were with childish play, a look would flame in Lambert's blazing eyes, . . . and from his soul some saying issued by which he strove to gather and emit the thoughts within him."

We cannot help but see that though the fleshly Louis was but fifteen years old, the soul Louis was one coming from a long pilgrimage—coming, through knowledge, in the direction of wisdom.

The power of clairvoyance as natural to the soul is illustrated by his visit to the manor of Rochambeau on a school excursion and recognizing all the details of the scene, though he had never been there before. He had seen them in a dream, from which circumstance he proceeded to deduce systematic conclusions, using a fragment on which to construct a whole creation.

He had evidence of what was virtually a separation between the body and the inward being. If they could be apart during sleep, why could he not divorce them when awake? If he saw without seeing, and heard without hearing, and crossed space while absolutely motionless, he must have internal faculties which were independent of external physical law. "Is there not a dawning science in that phenomenon?" he asks.

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Yes, truly, it points in the direction of a possible science of all sciences, the Science of Being. The continuity of meaning in this triad of books is along an ascending scale. All the characters have place in that orderly relativity to each other compelled by the nature of governing principles. The situations in which they are involved are the appropriate frame which makes prominent both their virtues and their defects, which are their approaches to, or departures from, these principles. Their fidelity to type is masterly; and however depressing the exterior of both person and place, the gleams and glints of that spirituality which, silently, and often unrecognized, develops within the veil, shines through, cheering and strengthening us as we read.

Louis' written "Treatise on the Will," which met the disastrous fate ever awaiting God-derived genius at the hands of ignorance, was his attempt at formulating this science. "In it," says Balzac, "Lambert laid down his ideas on man." To teach that the study of mankind is man; that to know one's self is the highest wisdom, is the aim of this author, who is here in accord with all great teachers, ancient and modern.

Raphael's "Treatise on the Will" would be a gigantic intellectual effort, but the thought of worldly fame and glory for himself, attendant on his work, would prevent the inspiration coming only from the higher soul. This element is supplied with Louis

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Lambert. The boy of fifteen is beyond the vigorous sensuous manhood of the other. The soul, older, grown, or more developed, is gravitating toward its own divinity instead of sinking to the level of its mortal propensities.

If we may suppose Balzac's views to be expressed in this treatise, he gave to Will, approximately, the meaning a class of thinkers to-day attach to Mind; and to Thought, the same relativity to Will that these give to Mind. Thus with him Will and Thought were the two generating agents and Volition and Idea the two products. But as we examine further, we miss a clear line of demarcation between thought and thinking, between the thing in itself or a power, and the volitional use of the power; between the abstract and the concrete. Yet many of his conclusions bear a striking resemblance to those evolved by these thinkers from the premise, "Mind and Thought are the beginning of all things."

"The acting or interior being," he says, "that unnamed, seeing, acting, producing being who accomplishes all without corporal demonstration, must, *in order to conform to his own nature*,* be subjected to none of the physical conditions by which the reacting or exterior being, the visible man, is checked in his manifestations."

"Heaven," he continues, "must be the survival of our perfected faculties, and hell the nothingness into

* The italics are the author's.

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which our unperfected faculties return;" or, condition constitutes locality; a truth so mighty and yet so simple as to be seldom seen.

And again: "Mesmer's discovery, so important and so illy understood, even at the present day, would have been found entire in Lambert's treatise, though Louis knew nothing of the works of the celebrated Swiss doctor. A logical and simple deduction of the principles he had observed showed him that Will could, *by a movement set going by the inward being,** accumulate itself, and by another movement be impelled outward, and even be imparted to material objects. Thus a man's whole force had potency to react upon others, and to infuse into them an essence foreign to their own, if they did not defend themselves from the aggression."

Under the name of hypnotism some psychical phenomena are to-day observed and studied instead of ridiculed without examination, a result compelled by that progress which leaves behind the one who first stood forth in their defence. And hypnotism as a remedial agent is receiving attention at the hands of those trained to scientific observation and research, to such extent as to rouse desire for the exclusive right to its therapeutic application; and this on the ground that in the hands of an ignorant or designing person the results would be most disastrous to the subject of the experiment. Time has seemed to prove, if this

* Ibid.

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claim is warranted by evidence, the truth of Balzac's words; but has it not also brought a knowledge, foreseen by him, as a needed ally—knowledge of how to defend one's self from such aggressions?

The general interest in psychological and metaphysical questions and problems which is everywhere observable to-day, is in marked contrast to the general apathy of even twenty-five years ago; and it has become concrete in various factions and schools whose members are distinguished by their adherence to and confidence in mental, in preference to physical resources. In spite of the fanaticism which confronts the unprejudiced observer of their methods, and amid all the vagaries attendant upon zeal without wisdom, there is found a residuum of evidence tending to prove a truth in the philosophy, and a practical value to its application; a value to be greatly enhanced when more experience shall have modified the fanaticism and dissipated the vagaries, bringing to the front the foundation principles that show mental means and resources to be the legitimate successor to physical means and resources.

In that large class of adherents to a mental therapeutic agent which numbers to-day many thousands, there are those who consider they have proved, again and again, that a volitional movement can be set going by their inward being which will accumulate itself, and which can be impelled outward to the changing of bodily conditions for themselves and for others;

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that they can learn, and that others can learn, to concentrate and direct an inner force which has potency to lessen and even to remove the ills which afflict a common humanity. The evidence of to-day would seem to prove Balzac prophet and seer, as well as philosopher; yet, much as is seen in his declarations by the mouth of Louis Lambert, we miss that clear, deductive sequence necessary for a scientific, as well as metaphysical statement, for thought is spoken of here and there as material force, while his illustration makes it emphatically a soul force. Yet we are even awed as we contemplate these efforts of the soul to comprehend the infinite, and we become, in a measure, prepared for the friction between the seen and the unseen, the known and the unknown, which later produces with Louis such excess of emotions.

As Balzac states it, "Lambert's work bore marks of the struggle that went on in his glorious soul between the great principles of Spiritualism and Materialism, round which the noblest minds have hovered without daring to blend them into one. Purely spiritualistic at first, he was irresistibly led to recognize the materialism of thought. . . . He had not yet the ability to produce a compact, homogeneous system, run at one casting. Yet, however incomplete his work, it was surely the rough draft of a science of which, later, he would have fathomed the mysteries, settled the foundations, searched out, deduced, and connected the developments."

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When we remember that "Louis Lambert" was written in 1832, may we not say that in the subsequent years this science that he approached has been born in the world, and its firstfruits are on every hand? May it not be possible to produce to-day the "compact, homogeneous system, run at one casting"? None of the by-gone centuries has offered a greater tribute of wisdom to a blinded and suffering world than the present. The metaphysics, not of Balzac alone, but of the many metaphysicians who have stood in the breach between Spiritualism and Materialism, have place in the homogeneous system of the present day, according as they "approach to or depart from eternal principles."

Louis' struggle between the extremes of one truth has been shared by them all; by the seeker for that which is veiled by visible matter; seekers for the forces which operate within it and the laws which govern their action; seekers for the great Initial Impulse which communicates the "breath of life" to suns and systems and souls. Their efforts have been the steps of ascent by which a grand system has been reached; and every past struggle in this direction, every present effort to see and verify the truth it offers, is part of that travail which slowly, yet steadily, forces a whole world from the womb of darkness to the living light.

The Bible, which influenced Louis' early years, grew more and more a revelation of the very truths

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his soul was struggling to find. "No book," he said, "was ever written whose germ does not lie there;" a statement which cannot fail of confirmation with one who has studied, candidly, the book itself, rather than accepted those traditions concerning it that have arisen in ignorance and been fostered by fear.

To one who has shared this experience of Lambert's, who has longed with a longing unutterable for a knowledge of truth, pure and unadulterated, and has found within the symbology of this mystical Book what he sought, this declaration of Balzac's has a particularly grateful significance. And he longs for the time when the present superstitious adherence to its historical letter shall be regarded as the real heresy, and what is now so denominated shall be seen as a new vitality forcing its way into the dead continuance of a dead past and compelling resurrection.

The one who sees the true nature and value of the Bible will agree with Balzac that the germ of eternal changeless truth which gives direction, power, and life to every book surviving the day that called it forth, is in it; and if he were compelled to choose between the two—the destruction of all our modern libraries and that of the Bible—he would let go these much valued collections of mixed facts and theories, retaining rather that embodiment of fixed principles that constitute our Scriptures.

For he knows that the substance of each and all their books could be reproduced from this one; that

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the real substance of all forthcoming books, even to those belonging specially to the scientific world, lies buried there—behind the backs of those faithful plodders who peer persistently, year after year, through the spectacles of ocular demonstration for that which necessarily is, before it can be demonstrated. And he wonders, with a never-ceasing wonder, why the modern authority should be one who never sees or reveals a truth till it has overtaken him; while the one who goes to meet it on its way, and can speak from a face-to-face acquaintance, is only the visionary dreamer whose words can have no weight.

The Bible is the book which is addressed to the soul, not to the intellect alone. It requires, therefore, something more than intellect to read and understand it, as it required more than intellect to write it. The highest recognition of truth is spontaneous rather than educated. It is the soul's involuntary testimony to the reality of the eternal. It constitutes the seer; and when the truly educative—which is the permanently redemptive—work of the world is finally summed up, it will be found that the work of the seer overbalances that of the intellectual man of science; for the foreseeing and foreknowing are preventive. The after-seeing and after-knowing that come from objective or exterior evidence, but slowly and painfully remove what has been ignorantly allowed to accumulate.

The Bible is a store-house of soul-knowledge. It

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must therefore wait its time for true recognition, which can come only through the higher development of the individual, precedent upon that of the race. Only the awakened soul can really read the book.

The letter is dark and obscure. Our inward light must pierce it, meeting and mingling with the light it hides. In itself it is truly "a lamp to the feet"; but the soul that would walk "in the way" must have its own taper lit from the same great flame.

And this taper is within us all. It is the "true light" that "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." It is the radiance of the higher soul that has been growing slowly within the husk of the outer consciousness; for we live ourselves into the eternal Substance of all things.

"Louis' early years," says Balzac, "grew more and more a revelation of the very truths his soul was struggling to find."

The Bible awaits this interior recognition which always precedes the permanent outward discovery. From the ranks of its true students shall grow a race of seers who dwell on serene heights far above the latitude of speculation, whose vision is not obscured by the mist and dust of materialistic scientific theory, whose ears are not deafened by the noise of intellectual strife, whose hearts are not frozen by knowledge without feeling, or maddened by feeling without wisdom. As princes of "the house of David," they shall

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become the world's saviors, drawing the sons and daughters of men to their divine inheritance.

What a striking contrast—and a truthful one, if we trace the continuity of the soul—is presented by Louis and Raphael in the motive impelling their work. "Even before leaving college," says Balzac, "Louis no longer felt a spur to fame; he had in a certain way abstractly experienced it, and after having examined it found nothing in it. Despising a sentiment so wholly personal, he said, "Fame is deified egoism."

Raphael, living solitary in his garret, working incessantly at his intellectual labor, was consoled for his present deprivation by the thought of what his fame should some time be and the admiring recognition he should receive.

For the eyes that can read them, the signs that distinguish a great from a purely intellectual soul are not lacking. The great soul is one that can renounce fame, fortune, the gratification of the senses, even what is called love and the life it sweetens—renounce, and live and work as if it had them all, using every power, developing every faculty, that it may do good for Good's sake, that it may love for Love's sake, finding blessedness in its own blessing. The higher human soul portrayed by Louis Lambert is the approach to this great soul, as the lesser human portrayed by Raphael is the descent from it in the opposite direction.

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Raphael's self-denial was really self-indulgence. Outwardly he lived in a garret on a few sous a day. Inwardly he indulged to excess in all of which he was outwardly deprived, stimulated by the worldly success which he already enjoyed by anticipation. His desired fame was of the kind prompted by his vanity and egotism, fitly accompanied by that "libertinism of the mind" that was the inward death afterward actualized in his career. All the kingdoms of the world were shown him "in a moment of time" as he sat in his comfortless garret, and he bought "the glory of them" at the price demanded.

Louis Lambert's lonely life of three years in Paris after leaving college, is an illustration of the "isolation of power." He was strong enough to lift his intellectual nature above the plane of self-gratification, compelling it to serve him in his efforts to put into form the revelations of his soul. This strength compels isolation, in that it prevents conformity to cut-and-dried theories and unseeing and unquestioning acceptance of self-declared authority, substituting instead unswerving allegiance to the inner wisdom.

It is a strength that withstands while it upbuilds—withstands the temptations to intellectual intoxication and aggression, while it steadily incorporates the ideal belonging to a higher level till this ideal becomes "the living Word." It is a strength that is more than physical, more than mental; a power that is not of this world—not of the shadow but of the

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substance. It is soul-energy, a force which, some time, carries all before it, even though it seem to pause for a while to gather new momentum. Eventually it makes its possessor the master of fate.

At this point in the development of the soul is found the bridge between two worlds—Religion and Science, or, positive abstract truth, and comparative demonstrated truth. It is their union, approached only by that soul whose type is Louis Lambert, and consummated in Seraphita, which gives the superlative or celestial truth, the full-orbed sun whose rays are too dazzling to be borne by the purely intellectual soul that is blinded by them.

Though this bridge is pressed by many—it is to be pressed by multitudes of feet—it is always crossed alone; for this is part of the isolation that belongs to the power to tread it. For the soul, at this stage of its development, there is the reconciliation between seeming opposites that brings completeness and wisdom; and, so far from seeking for authority, it begins to speak with it.

Louis spends three years of ceaseless study and effort in Paris, after leaving college at eighteen years of age. Having thus exhausted his small patrimony, he returns to his uncle, who is now his sole guardian, and with whom he meets the woman who afterward possesses his life. To such a nature love was intensely idealistic. For him there could be nothing less than an absolute self-surrender to the one he loved.

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If, in reading them, we can penetrate but a little way into their atmosphere, Louis' letters to his beloved are so tender and beautiful, so all-giving and so little compelling, so full of that awe which accompanies a great gladness born of purity of soul and life, that we feel as if, a little way beyond, there stood a radiant presence; and we stoop, involuntarily, to remove the shoes of a lesser passion, feeling that here, and here only, is holy ground.

That the true marriage is that of souls, not bodies, though the attraction of soul-quality—is that mating by the divine right which is "from before the foundation of the world"; is that freedom of love that is the very reverse of the license of the senses—is grandly told in the devotion of Pauline to Louis after he has become insane. And here is again emphasized that higher nature and office of woman that must inevitably wait for recognition, till, through both suffering and revelation, the collective soul of the world has been lifted to the plane of opened vision:

First, the love of the senses; then, the love of the soul. First, woman as the inspirer of pleasure; then, the inspirer of divine realities.

First, the woman for time; then, the woman for eternity.

First, the servant; then, the seer.

The divine motherhood is the accompaniment of wifehood, which is incomplete without it. Not only

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as her duty, but as her great privilege, Pauline devotes her life to the care of her lover-husband. To her he is not insane; he was only living in another and higher world, free and untrammelled, while his body still tarried below. Sitting at her embroidery frame in the darkened room, in soul she was with him, yet leaving him free to roam as he would, ascend beyond her, even, and find her again on return, the faithful watcher, companion, and friend.

It has been said that Balzac made Louis Lambert's insanity a shield for his views, which were too far in advance of his time to be presented other than as the utterances of one who would not be held responsible for them. While this may be true, may it not also be possible that this insanity is in line with the order of development Balzac portrays in the three books?

See what a vivid description he gives us in Louis' flights of imagination as portrayed by his letters, of the union of the sexes above what is ordinarily called marriage. As the soul ascends, marriage must ascend. The social marriage will die its own deserved death, and great wealth upon one side and poverty on the other will be no bar when like souls attract each other. On that plane the "social catch" will be the pariah, and purity of life, mind, and heart the only patent of nobility.

Balzac suggests, in speaking of Louis' great faculties, "might not love have raised them to some other

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mode of expression, which, perhaps, we calumniate as madness without comprehending its true quality?"

May not Louis' insanity and his rare utterances in that state suggest possibility of the soul's independence of the body, which is only its means of expression on this plane;—the soul's life of its own, so above and beyond the material that it filters down through but infrequently;—the completeness of soul existence and the nothingness of material environment which is for the body only;—the real nature of death as but a birth into a higher self-consciousness, with consequent unconsciousness of the mere mechanism still acting automatically?

So far from portraying a case of ordinary insanity or madness, the author has presented one of prolonged ecstasy—the lifting of the soul to the plane of direct contemplation where it has no need for reasoning or for speech. It is a case of "absent from the body to be present with the Lord." The body belongs to the outer darkness; the soul to the light behind the veil.

It will be remembered that he becomes insane on the night before his wedding-day; and that his betrothed, who is an heiress, feeling herself as much his wife as if the marriage ceremony had taken place, removes him to her home and cares for him as constantly as a mother for her helpless child. He never leaves a darkened room, where she is his constant and

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devoted attendant. He speaks but rarely. At intervals she writes and preserves his fragmentary utterances—fragmentary to the superficial reader, but which to the student who holds the clue, show, as they do to her, a relation to each other hinging upon a thread of meaning which holds them together.

"To other men he must appear insane," she says; "to me, who live in his thought, all his ideas are lucid."

Here is our clue. Live in Louis Lambert's thought, and we shall find the meaning of those fragments which embody Balzac's philosophy as he has outlined it in these three books. The ideas they present will become lucid.

"Here below," he says, "all is the product of an ethereal substance, the common base of the several phenomena known under the name of Electricity, Heat, Light, Magnetic Fluid, etc. The universality of the transmutations of this Substance constitutes what is commonly called matter."

"By constant nutrition Will is related to Substance, finding it in all transmutations when penetrated by thought."

"From the greater or lesser perfection of the human apparatus come the innumerable forms which thought assumes."

The Science of Being postulates one Substance back of all phenomena, eternally subsistent, which is ceaselessly operative as Thought, and which is mani-

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fested through the various forms resultant from human energy.

"If space exists," he says, "certain faculties bestow the power of traversing it with such rapidity that their effects are equivalent to its abolition. From thy couch to the frontiers of the world there are but two steps—Will and Faith."

Here is a recognition of the higher soul faculties which outstrip in action those merely intellectual, and bring us as one "born out of season," to the eternal "Now" that rules over time.

And here we have the grand perception—so absurd for those who require explanation—"Facts are naught; they do not exist. Ideas alone subsist."

He divides the world of ideas into three spheres—that of Instinct, of Abstraction, and of Specialism.

"The greater part of visible humanity, that is, the weaker part, inhabits the sphere of Instinctivity. At Abstraction Society begins. Though Abstraction, as compared with Instinct, is an almost divine power, it is infinitely feeble beside the endowment of Specialism which alone can explain God. . . . Specialism consists in seeing the things of the material world as well as those of the spiritual world in their original and consequential ramifications. . . . Specialism carries with it intuition. Intuition is a faculty of the inner man of whom Specialism is an attribute."

"The Specialist is necessarily the loftiest expression of Man—the link which connects the visible to

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the superior worlds. He acts, he sees, he feels through his inner being. The Abstractive thinks. The Instinctive simply acts."

"Hence three degrees for man. As an Instinctive he is below the level; as an Abstractive he attains to it; as a Specialist he rises above it. Specialism opens to man his true career; the infinite dawns upon him; he catches a glimpse of his destiny."

"There exist three worlds—the Natural World, the Spiritual World, and the Divine World. Humanity moves hither and thither in the Natural World, which is fixed neither in its essence nor its properties. The Spiritual World is fixed in its essence and variable in its properties. The Divine World is fixed in its properties and in its essence."

"Consequently there is a material worship, a spiritual worship, and a divine worship; which three are manifested by Action, Word, and Prayer, or Deed, Understanding, Love. The Instinctive desires deeds; the Abstractive turns to ideas; the Specialist sees the end; he aspires to God, whom he inwardly perceives or contemplates."

"Therefore, perhaps one day there shall be a new gospel, which will read, 'And the flesh shall be made the Word; it shall become the utterance of God.'"

This classification of humanity and its states or worlds is a summing up which reveals Balzac's wonderful insight and commands more and more respect and admiration as its application and meaning is un-

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covered to us, as they cannot fail to be to the student of the Science of Being.

He sees that the natural world is fixed neither in its essence nor properties, because it is only objective phenomena, varying according to the subjective state which they express. In itself only an aggregation of lifeless, inert shapes, they are moved upon by the nature they veil, and which, through its universality, touches them at all points, so that not a particle of what our sense-perception calls matter is without its centre of force.

To him the Spiritual World is fixed in its essence because that essence is the eternal real that changes not—the true ego—the image of God. It is variable in its properties because these are the soul or self of the ego that must change in quality, rising from least to highest. The highest soul is the fixed or eternal property which, with the fixed or eternal essence, gives the Divine World—the perfect conscious unity of the ego and the soul. At the beginning of man's career this unity is potential. The destiny his origin involves, that he must inevitably fulfil, is that attainment of the consciousness of this unity which makes it the living, real, consciously present, or actualized, instead of potential, fact.

And Balzac's prophesied new gospel is a gospel preached to-day—the "good tidings of great joy which shall be for all people"; for it is not only the recognition of this eternal necessity of man's nature,

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but of the means—the present practical means—by which this necessity may now be met and comparatively realized.

The visible flesh shall be understood in its true relation to the soul and the ego. Body shall become the expression of the Word—the divine Thought which is the "utterance of God." It is the completion of the circle, the ultimate of evolution, the returning to the divine and eternal source of that which primarily came forth from it.

Two more quotations from these utterances of Louis' and we must leave them:

"Unity has been the point of departure for everything which has been produced; thence have resulted composites, but the end must be identical with the beginning. Hence the spiritual formula: Composite unity; variable unity; fixed unity."

"The Universe is, then, variety in unity. Motion is the means, Number is the result. The end is the return of all things to Unity, which is God."

We may see the eternal ego as composite unity, and the soul as variable unity. The soul has first a natural, then a spiritual, and lastly a divine quality. These three constitute one soul, and yet a soul to be lost and a soul to be saved. The natural cannot assimilate with the divine. The spiritual is the mediator between the two. It puts off the natural and puts on the divine, bringing from the variable the fixed unity.

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The fixed unity between the divine soul and the changeless ego, is that conscious oneness with the Infinite *I Am* which knows no end. It is the celestial sphere, God's dwelling-place, the source of the dynamic Energy which completes its circuit, unstayed by mankind's puny efforts to oppose its own ignorant will to Infinite Motion.

Seeing the threefold development of the threefold being, Man, we do not experience the shock and sadness felt by the reader unable to follow this clue, as we contemplate the picture of that soul-marriage illumining the shadows of the darkened room. There the Madonna-love accompanies the nothingness of sense-existence—nothing through contemplation of the all-ness of the higher soul.

In " The Magic Skin " the higher real was mastered by sense-existence, and its accompanying sensual love. The Madonna-love is the motherhood of wifehood. It is faithful to complete self-sacrifice, not through a blind, merely sentimental, trust, but through an understanding faith, confidence, and reverence. And from the union of this quality of love with the illuminated understanding as represented by Louis, is born the higher soul that stands at the threshold of divinity.

Balzac's metaphysics, which at this point he has illustrated by these touching figures, cease to be puzzling to us.

In " The Magic Skin " we have the Instinctive, the

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material worship, the Action, the Natural world. In "Louis Lambert" we have the Abstractive, the spiritual worship, the Word or understanding, the Spiritual World. In "Seraphita" we are to find the Specialist, the divine worship, the Love or Prayer, and the Divine World.

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SERAPHITA.

In this last, and glorious, number of the triad, we reach the sublime height toward which Balzac with masterly skill has been leading us. The third world stands before us veiled in the solemn majesty of the infinite. The Action of the Natural, becoming the Word of the Spiritual, has become the Prayer of the Divine—that all-absorbing, all-consuming desire of the soul God-ward which, as wings, lifts it to the Infinite.

The succession of types afforded in these books find their ultimate in "Seraphita"—Seraphitus. The threefold soul developing from the threefold genus, Man, reaches its highest stage in this androgynous being. The third line of the second triangle is completed. The meaning of "Solomon's Seal" engraved upon "The Magic Skin" is revealed.

While our interest is held unflaggingly as we follow the incident and philosophy of these books, while our intellectual admiration for their author increases continually, something more, something indefinable at first, impresses itself upon us, till, at last, like the peal of a mellow, deep-toned bell which we have indistinctly heard from afar, there bursts upon us the call of the ages—"Man, know thyself."

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Balzac has added one more to the opportunities for self-knowledge—that work for humanity than which there is none greater, nor one less sure of recognition and appreciation in the day of the worker. Had his contemporaneous fame rested upon these books alone, his years of struggle with poverty and adversity would not have been crowned with the respite and reward of his later years.

To trace the three sides of the second triangle is to have the nature of Seraphita illumined by that light which reveals its quality and characteristics. Holding the view that the threefold being, Man, illustrated by the first triangle, is, necessarily, a two in one, as the genus from which the soul or species develops, the ultimate of this development, or the highest species, must be a two in one—that being which is neither a man nor a woman because it is both.

With Raphael de Valentine we have the two halves of the one being separated from each other, the man desiring the woman according to the instinct of his animal soul, a desire that costs him his life. The attraction of the two halves for unity wears that coloring for the man, but has the higher aspect for the woman as she is represented by Pauline.

This higher quality of attraction drawing the two halves together on a higher plane than that of the senses, bringing a soul-marriage impossible on the lesser and lower, is portrayed by Louis Lambert and Mademoiselle de Villenoix.

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The perfection of this unity, the consciousness of that perfect oneness which forbids the least sense of separateness, gives us Seraphita, the woman-half of the soul, and Seraphitus, the man-half of the soul, together as one being. The long pilgrimage through which each has been seeking the other is finished, and only ascension remains.

The gradations of love, the natural, the spiritual, and the divine; the transitions or growth from the least to the highest necessitated by the very nature of Man, hold us with their mystic spell; and we can understand, in a degree, Seraphita's imperiousness under Wilfrid's solicitations and Minna's constancy.

Some time, within ourselves, the violent love that flames with a devouring fury, and therefore is capable of becoming nothing but cold ashes, must yield to a higher. The love of the senses and of natural instinct is transmuted in the crucible of human suffering into love of and for the soul. Detached from the purely physical, it yields to the supremacy of the spiritual, preparing the way for the divine.

Throughout the soul's travail and ascension, love rules all things, and according to its quality. What we are at any given stage is determined by what and how we love. How we appear to others, is determined by what and how they love.

May not the locality in which Seraphita is born illustrate this eternal fact? Far up on the northern

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coast of Norway, far away from the sensuous warmth and luxuriance of the tropics, is she placed by Balzac in that magnificent description of this region with which the story begins. "Here," he says, "we meet the majesty of Cold, seated eternally at the pole in that regal silence which is the attribute of all absolute monarchy." Every extreme principle carries with it an appearance of negation, or lack of love; for does not the one who loves with the senses say to the one who, foreseeing the divine, loves with the soul, "You love me no longer, your love is dead?"

When sensuous love does not meet with the response that accords with its demands, it can see no love. It has eyes only for its kind, which it rules more or less savagely, slaying remorselessly, because ignorantly, the tender offspring that would lead it from its self-imposed bondage. It fights and wars tempestuously. Noise is its normal expression, protestation and solicitation its bulwarks of defence. Incapable of understanding the patient silence of the soul-love, it sees death where are the vigorous shoots of lasting life; and it mourns with the abandon of its kind till a new like attraction draws it to itself.

But the soul-love, noiseless and steadfast under all the tumult of the senses, grows from shoot to stem, branch, and bud, self-contained and self-controlled, bringing the perfect blossom of self-less love which can claim kinship with the divine.

Sensuous love is the despot of the valley where

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dwells the shadow of death; but the divine love is the absolute monarch who reigns in eternal calm, where are mountain heights scaled only by the knowing and all-daring soul.

How natural it seems to connect mountains with aspiration, with the effort to attain the ideal! Throughout the Bible they are used in this connection; and we do not forget the part that book plays in influencing the life of Louis Lambert. The way up is the only way out for the soul that must fulfil its destiny. "He went up into a mountain" is a common phrase in the book, and symbolical of the soul's attempt to reach, first, a higher perception, then a higher realization or consciousness than the present that includes suffering and disappointment. The illustration is maintained in both the Old and New Testaments, as a line stretching from peak to peak and touching many another between them—from Mount Ararat to Mount Calvary.

We are introduced to Seraphita when she, as Seraphitus, with her companion Minna, on their ice-shoes, rises from ledge to ledge toward the summit "of the Falberg."

"Keep your eyes on me," he says to her; "do not look below you."

"Why not?" she asks.

"You wish to know why? Then look!"

"The awful sensation of abysses" seizes Minna. She feels herself drawn to the below by a mysterious

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magnetic power. Yielding to it as one too strong to be resisted, even while declaring she loves none but Seraphitus, she is saved by him from falling into the depths. He breathes upon her and her trial is over.

"Who art thou?" she asks. "Ah, thou art my life."

Though the soul must, some time, choose only the divine, it must also know why it so chooses. It must look upon its own lower nature, lesser possibilities and their consequences, knowing their lessness even while they draw it toward their level; a fall from which it is saved—even with this knowledge—only by the strength of this higher nature which it has chosen to follow and unto which it cleaves as friend and savior. Truly, the breath of life for the soul comes from the divine, that sustains and saves it in its journey up to the source from whence it came.

But this being, who is a man to his clinging companion, goes higher yet, and at the very edge of a narrow platform looks fearlessly below, defying, through consciousness of power, "its dazzling invitation"—"an abyss facing an abyss." "We are born to stretch upward to the skies," he says. So the soul that knows itself looks back fearlessly upon the way by which it has ascended, and looks upward confidently into the infinite way that is yet above it.

They mount higher after a short rest, and at a point where vegetation ceases they find a marvellous

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flower; from thick green leaves, pure white stars, edged with a line of gold, and with crimson anthers, but no pistils, a flower that "emits a fragrance as of mingled roses and orange-blossoms," and which Seraphitus contemplates "as though it uttered plaintive thoughts which he alone could understand."

In this flower we have one of the author's most delicately suggestive illustrations of the nature of Seraphita-Seraphitus.

If we may view yellow or gold as the color of wisdom—that highest knowledge attained in its fulness only by the perfected soul—and red as the color of the sensuous nature—the Adam-man—this view, taken in connection with the fact that the anther as the pollen-bearing part pertains to the male nature of the flower, and the pistil as the seed-bearing organ to the female nature, gives a striking significance to the illustration.

The soul, or species involved in the genus Man, must develop to its full flower through all the intervening stages from potentiality to actuality. Primarily a two in one, appearing separately in this evolution as Eve taken from Adam, who must find and blend with him as he with her, it reaches its culmination as the woman-man and the man-woman from whom is to come no offspring or successor, for it is the whole.

The sensuous nature, the red Adam, must be lifted up and found in this perfected, divine soul, trans-

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muted, redeemed, purified by Wisdom and Love; not a loss of masculine strength, but a strengthened strength which serves the regenerated Eve, holding itself instead of her in subjection to their mutual divinity.

This culmination is the divine marriage—the marriage of the Soul's immaculate virginity with the purified Adam, whose type is Seraphita-Seraphitus, that is illustrated by this matchless white flower, within which are red and gold, emitting an ethereal and fugitive perfume as of roses and orange-blossoms, and found above the line where vegetation, or reproduction, ceases.

White is wholeness. It contains all colors, none of which is it, each of which is less than it, all of which are necessary to its completeness. The God-man of our own New Testament, that dual soul, male without and female within, is clad in raiment white as the light, a seamless vesture; though his immediate predecessor in Genesis wears a "coat of many colors." The Christ is androgynous, appearing to sense-perception as a man, and revealed in the female or divine virgin aspect only to the spiritualized vision that can see the Son of God.

Can we not trace Balzac's metaphysics in this scene upon the mountain?—the cold whiteness that to the clinging human nature seems lack of feeling, of love?

"You are so hopelessly perfect in all things," says Minna.

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"From which you conclude I am unfeeling," answers Seraphitus, who, through excess of feeling, is transfigured; for on this mountain he shines with a radiance that illumines his face and person—an inward radiance shining through him like light through an alabaster vase.

From whence this light, this radiance? It is the divinely illuminated soul. The human soul pays the price of initiation into the divine mysteries—crucifixion. It lays down its life to find the lasting life.

Hear Seraphitus as he says: "With us, and us alone, begins the knowledge of things. We become great through intellect and feeling. . . . Nothing is stable here. . . . Our fleeting happiness is the forerunning proof of another and perfect happiness. . . . Men ever mislead themselves in science by not perceiving that all things on this globe are related and co-ordinated to the general evolution, to a constant movement and production which bring them, necessarily, both advancement and end. Man himself is not a finished creation."

These words remind us that Man is created the image of God, but he is made, or finished, within that image. Within Man's own nature is all that is requisite for its unfolding. Man will never be finished, completely made, till he stands forth as the likeness of God. This is the aim and object of evolution which must be discerned if we would find the "missing

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link"; and when discerned, the continuity of organic structure so far traced but points with unerring finger to that continuity of soul behind it that compels the putting forth of still higher species till that Christ which is God-likeness is reached. But the "missing link" must be sought and found at that point in this orderly and unbroken continuity where structure crosses the line of visibility; where from what is called organic it becomes psychic, a soul-structure no less orderly, or according to Nature's fundamentals, than those that are visible to the sense that analyses, weighs, and measures them. All preceding species prepare the way for the one able to build character; and this one prepares the way of the divine.

Seraphitus continues: "We are the noblest of God's great works. Has he not given us the faculty of reflecting on Nature; *of gathering it within us by thought?*" *

Nature is within Man, not extraneous to him; what we see as objective is included within consciousness; realization of our own lasting being means gathering all nature within us by thought till in us it is incarnated. Soul-growth is but the orderly withdrawing and gathering up in the within of what has been projected and experienced as the without; that embodying of experience which, through a process of elimination, is the "survival of the fittest."

* The italics are the author's.

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Far up on this mountain, in the stillness of "the absolute monarchy of Cold," Seraphitus says to his companion, "Standing here . . . do you not feel within you something deeper far than mind, grander than enthusiasm, of greater energy than will? Are you not conscious of emotions whose interpretation is no longer in us? Do you not feel your pinions? Let us pray."

Truly, when growing realization of the nature of our own being has brought us nearer and nearer to its source—brought us away from externals that are indrawn as we take our upward flight, the time comes when our wings, governed by the impulse which cannot cease, once it is established, seek to bear us to the very presence of the omnipotent *I Am;* that presence which is reached only through the absolute monarchy of the higher love.

How wonderfully has Balzac, in this opening scene of the book, set before us the aspiration which cannot be content with aught less than the highest; the momentum of the soul which impels it onward; the gateway which lies beyond those to which intellect holds the key; the purity of desire that is the prayer of the soul nearly ready to be crowned with the "weight of glory" that is its divine heritage! Throughout this book we see the inability of lesser things—less than the Divine Ideal, to hold the soul back from its higher home. Whatever the aspect they present, they have no power to charm. To finish the

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work it is given to do is the only desire, the only endeavor.

As Seraphitus and Minna stand together on the mountain looking down upon the village far below, she weeps, and wonders that he does not weep with her.

"Why should I weep?" says he. "I see no longer human wretchedness. Here, Good appears in all its majesty. There, beneath us, I hear the supplications and the wailings of the harp of sorrows which vibrates in the hands of captive souls. Here, I listen to the choir of harps harmonious."

Is not this the same truth emphasized in our day—Evil exists only for those who see and feel it? The reality of evil is our own inability to see the Good. If we get above the plane of suffering and sorrow by freeing our own captive soul from its bondage and helping it to climb the mountain of right recognition, good will appear in all its majesty—we, too, shall hear, in place of wailings, "the choir of harps harmonious."

Miseries are great or small in proportion to our distance from them; and the world is full of evil, or is a means of working out the eternal good which is everywhere present and waiting for manifestation, according as we are of the world, or are in it, without being of it. Incapable, while suffering, of catching the harmony, hearing only the discord, we strive impotently against the great flood of evil. Not till a finer and more subtle capacity to see and hear is born

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of suffering, does good begin to "appear in all its majesty"; and we bow in adoration where formerly we have said, "Let us curse God and die."

The difficulty which the average reader encounters in reading this book is removed for the one who can understand its mysticism. To him Wilfrid and Minna are the male and female, the rational and emotional natures of the soul. The one is the complement of the other, is incomplete without the other.

Minna sees in the dual being only her desired and necessary counterpart, Seraphitus, not the wholeness. Equally is this the case with Wilfrid, who sees only the woman—the Seraphita. This dual being stands to both as their own higher ideal, as that which each lacks for completeness. Both long for it, each according to the nature.

Minna sees the man, commanding, powerful, protecting. He guides her unerringly and supports her unfalteringly over all the dangers of the mountain ascent and descent. She feels the male force operating through the sublimated intellect. She is all feeling, is passive, and is irresistibly drawn to the necessary union with the male, positive, active element.

Wilfrid is the positive, rational nature, and he sees the loving woman in Seraphita and desires her. He needs to feel rather than to reason. He is imperious in his demands and he has yet to learn the meekness of the spirit.

What Minna and Wilfrid each lack in themselves is

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what they find in Seraphita, who instructs them both; and who is never more kind than when she seems the most cruel. They lack understanding; for the understanding of either half of the nature alone is not sufficient; each is crippled without the other.

"Seraphita-Seraphitus," says Balzac, "was gifted with the awful faculty of comprehension." Because of their lack of comprehension they suffer when their desires are not immediately gratified; but Seraphita knows that "sorrow is a lamp that illumines life."

Understanding of causes and their relation to effects is necessary for redemption from suffering; but the rational understanding alone, however full and complete as such, is not sufficient. Neither is that emotion, pure and simple, which has no lasting foundation of principle to rest upon, enough. The faculty of comprehension, "awful" in its majestic completeness rather than limited through its one-sidedness, comes only from the united understanding—the union of reason and feeling which saves feeling from a false and fatal sentiment, and reason from an equally false and fatal frost.

Balzac has also pointed out by means of these characters a great truth—that if we hold a high ideal, as eventually we must, we can reach it only by taking the intervening steps.

Nature knows no gaps or jumps. She is orderly, everything is in its place. Confusion and missing links belong to our own near-sightedness. We are

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blind to the many delicate connections which preserve system and harmony; and in our fancied wisdom imagine that we are mastering her secrets, bringing order out of what to us seems chaos. She smiles serenely at our blindness, waiting for its consequences to teach us our needs. When our wisdom has become ignorance and our ignorance true wisdom, she compensates us for our toil and suffering, becoming the companion and friend of the soul-pilgrim, as she has been the Sphinx and scourge of the intellectual despot.

Minna and Wilfrid both desire Seraphita; but before they can possess her they must desire and possess each other. Two in one is the divine likeness. The inability of the rational nature, with its attendant expectations, to realize the perception and power which come from the union of the two, is strongly revealed in Wilfrid's conversation with Seraphita. She speaks for him an unknown tongue, even as she does at first for Minna. Her "awful faculty of comprehension" forms the answers which do not accord with their limited perceptions. This rouses sorrow in Minna and anger in Wilfrid, again a striking illustration of their natures. So, when the divine, penetrating through the intervening strata, seeks to instruct us, we at first reject and turn from the heavenly intent, only to seek it later with tears and beseeching.

"It wounds me," says Wilfrid, to Seraphita, "to hear you apply the dreadful knowledge with which

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you strip from all things human the properties that time and space and form have given them, and consider them mathematically in the abstract."

Here the Wilfrid within ourselves comforts us. Does it not wound us when a discovered truth which affords, perhaps, intellectual delight is *applied* to our cherished wishes, possessions, and intent? Application brings the discovery home to ourselves with a crushing force that makes us seek to get away from it, truth for its own sake, whatever may result, not being yet our dominating desire. To strip from all things human the properties that our puny loves and weaknesses have given them is something so appalling to us! We cannot bear their nakedness without the help of that "awful faculty of comprehension"; and we prefer to feel, rather than to comprehend, even though our feeling make a fools' paradise which must inevitably some time end.

The road to divinity is strewn with the wreckage of false sentiment and temporal blindness; and it is trodden successfully only by the feet of him who masters as he goes. Self-mastery is the price to be paid at every step of the way that leads to God. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Wilfrid's only demand—one impossible to be met—is, "Love me as I love you." Is not this the common demand made in the name of love? "Love me as I love you!" Does not one who loves feel defrauded if his love is not returned in kind? Will he not re-

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sent bitterly, passionately, a kind of love which he does not understand, if offered in return for his own? Is not this unintentionally selfish element in our loves the cause of many of our miseries? Do we not mourn a lost love when the experience is but a purification of love? Do we not demand what generations of custom have permitted and declare absence of love when the demand is not met with compliance? and even though a truer and nobler love prompts the refusal?

Seraphita, incapable of this kind of love, or the desire for it, strips it of the properties given by custom and limited perception, and considers it as it is in itself; a cold-blooded proceeding to Wilfrid, who cannot yet comprehend her.

"I will let the subject drop, Wilfrid," answers Seraphita. "Tell me what you think of this bearskin rug which my poor David has spread out."

Why not? Surely it is vain to teach those to fly who do not yet know they have wings. It is wiser to descend to their plane and wait patiently for the time when they shall find them.

The travail through which the rational-human soul passes, before it is capable of desiring the ideal afforded by Seraphita, is suggested by her words to him.

"I torment you, Wilfrid. You, who came to these northern lands for rest; you, worn out by the impetuous struggle of genius unrecognized; you, weary

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with the patient toils of science; you, who well-nigh dyed your hands in crime and wore the fetters of human justice."

She breathed softly on his forehead and he fell asleep at her feet. "Rest," she said, "I cannot show myself such as I am to thee who art strong."

The very strength of the purely rational nature prevents its grasp of what it is nevertheless compelled to seek—the higher spiritual ideal. It must rest from its labors, become as a little child, to enter into the higher reality.

Seraphita continues to talk to him as he lies asleep, for then, as she says, the hour is come when the soul awakes into freedom.

How beautifully does Balzac teach, here, the need and possibility of revelation. Only when the clamoring reason is stilled can the highest of all truth enter the soul. Asleep to the outward, awake to the inward, it draws from that which its reason cannot comprehend. And the higher woman is the revelator. For the intuitive nature performs its office faithfully, when she, as the eternal feminine, ever virgin, is permitted to act according to her nature. She can never be coerced by the demands of her masculine mate, though through long years she may be held in subjection.

As Wilfrid lies asleep at Seraphita's feet he is gaining glimpses of what his waking vision cannot show him. "Now," she says, "I may tell thee how I love

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thee. Dost thou not see the nature of my love, a love without self-interest?"

Such a love cannot be comprehended where there is selfish desire; for it is the love that is God. It is above and beyond the power of the finite intellect, and can be known only as it is felt. Hence, the highest religion, which is the recognition and adoration of the true Christ, is not an educated sentiment, but that real feeling whose foundations lie deep in the eternal and which is manifested in a life of deeds without doctrine.

First, the love which is all sense; then the mixture of sense and soul; then the love that is all soul, the virgin motherhood of the world that begets and brings forth the offspring of infinite, exhaustless Love.

"For the last few days," says Balzac, "whenever Wilfrid entered Seraphita's presence his body seemed to fall away from him into nothingness." Is it not true that body is naught but a means to an end and soul is all; that the love which concerns the body is temporal, while the love which broods protectingly over the soul is eternal?

The suggestiveness of Seraphita as a type appears also in her old servant, David, serving-man instead of maid. The "divine womanly" leads, the man waits upon her, watching and guarding her so far as he is able; but she is ever in advance of him, and he cannot enter into and share all her experiences. He

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can only serve her, can grow higher only by serving while he adores her.

Balzac's familiarity with the teachings of Swedenborg and their influence upon him are plainly seen in this book. The revelation made to Wilfrid by Minna's father, Monsieur Becker, in answer to the young man's questions regarding Seraphita's parentage, seems to be an approximate summary of Swedenborg's philosophy.

Her parentage appears to the uninitiated reader to partake of the mysterious and miraculous. Her father is Swedenborg's cousin, and her mother, as fit mate for her father, was found for him by Swedenborg in a vision. Their wedded life was a perfect union—"the harmony of two souls indissolubly united," says Balzac. When the wife found herself with child, both prepared to bid the earth farewell. They were to be transformed when the child had grown old enough and strong enough to exist alone.

This occurred when Seraphita was nine years old and she, wonderful and incomprehensible from babyhood, manifested no sorrow or sense of loss. "They live in me," she said; and her words show that she illustrates the perfect fruit of a perfect mating—the two in one which is of one in two.

She lives alone, a young maiden, with only old David, her servant, seen rarely except on Christmas day in church, the only time in the year she goes there, and where she is separated from the other worship-

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pers by a visible space. If that space does not exist between herself and them she suffers.

Here we see the apartness of the divine soul from the lesser soul, though it dwells for a time on the lower plane, that it may be manifested in the flesh. Distinct as the likeness of God, the God-man, it is not separate from the purely human man, but is in that unity that is necessitated by the relation of number and figure. Suffering belongs to the human soul; victory over suffering, to the divine.

Wilfrid suffers from being near her, for the friction between the divine and the rational-human wounds the lesser.

"But," says Balzac, "many women hear the tones of a mighty organ when Seraphita enters the church."

It is to the intuitive woman-soul, the female, that the Annunciation is made to which the rational-human is deaf, dumb, and blind, till it is raised through suffering—which all its intellectual power cannot prevent—to where it ceases to probe and begins to really feel. The intuitive human catches the harmony of the divine and escapes the friction of the discord between the lesser and the greater.

Monsieur Becker, both as narrator of Seraphita's history and in his subsequent visits to her in company with his daughter and Wilfrid, represents natural doubt, literal accuracy, regard for authority, and blindness to the things of the spirit.

He cannot understand Seraphita-Seraphitus, and

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therefore thinks those who see in her what he does not see, crazy. Even when she meets and refutes all his doubts and arguments, handling his own weapons with consummate skill— handling them with her male nature and force—and he is asked "Who taught her this?" he can only take refuge in the agnostic "I do not know."

The divine is the all-knowing soul, and Seraphita's teachings are the revelations from on high, incomprehensible even when given by her male nature through her intellect, inconceivable when given through her female devotion and adoration.

The interview between her, Monsieur Becker, Wilfrid, and Minna, after her struggle with the—to them —invisible powers, reveals Balzac's insight into that science of being, which appears as the philosophy in his books. "I wear," says Seraphita, "the seal of Solomon."

As we follow her magnificent analysis of modern science and its conclusions, which lays bare its limitations and their defects, her sublime conceptions which retain their half-truths and relate them to a whole, we are compelled to admit that the wisest man who ever lived was indeed he who asked, as the greatest boon possible to be bestowed upon him, "Give me, O Lord, an understanding heart"; and that this young girl of seventeen was crowned with the same wisdom, nay, was its very embodiment; for her understanding was not of the head alone, it was of the

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heart as well, a union necessary for that positive knowledge which transcends mere reason.

As Seraphitus she wields the "axe of doubt" with far more accuracy of aim and certainty of result than Monsieur Becker himself. Her penetration, her merciless logic, strip even more naked for him the agnosticism he has sought to cover with the life-work of the world's geniuses, with the reflections of his own trained mind that has been constantly stimulated—pastor though he is—by the poverty of his soul.

But, as Seraphita, she sees and supplies what they have never been able to find and apply; what all his reflections have never brought within his reach. As the man she is the reasoner; as the woman she is the diviner. As the union of the two, she is complete in knowledge, the possessor of Wisdom, that pearl of great price for which is given all that a man hath, even himself.

She is the highest visible species of the genus, Man, the regenerated Adam and Eve no longer separated, but one, foreseen by a David, foreknown by a Solomon, felt and manifested by a Jesus. She is the incarnated truth; the living Word; the sword of destruction for intellectual error and inefficiency, that slays a King Saul; the redeeming and saving spirit for the "offspring of the house of David."

To Monsieur Becker she says: "The species which are beneath you have no conception of the universe, and you have; why should there not be other species

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above you more intelligent than your own? Man ought to be better informed than he is about himself before he spends his strength in measuring God."

Balzac's insight is nowhere more clearly shown than in his use of number and abstract mathematics, and the relation between the curve and the straight line.

"You believe," Seraphita says, "in Number—a base on which you have built the edifice of sciences which you call exact. Without Number what would become of mathematics? Well, what mysterious being endowed with the faculty of living forever could utter, and what language would he compact to word the Number that contains the infinite numbers whose existence is revealed to you by thought? Ask it of the loftiest human genius; he might ponder it for a thousand years and what would be his answer? You know neither where Number begins, nor where it pauses, nor where it ends. Here you call it Time, there you call it Space. Nothing exists except by Number. . . . The least as well as the greatest creations are distinguishable from each other by quantities, qualities, dimensions, forces—all attributes created by Number. The infinitude of Numbers is a fact proved to your soul, but of which no material proof can be given. The mathematician himself tells you that the infinite of numbers exists, but cannot be proved. . . . The existence of Numbers depends upon the Unit. . . . God is a glorious Unit. . . .

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You do not need that I should prove to you that the Infinite must everywhere be like unto itself, and that, necessarily, it is One. God alone is Infinite, for surely there cannot be two Infinites or Ones. . . . The man who can conceive the Infinite by his intelligence, cannot deal with it in its entirety; if he could he would be God. Your Numeration, applying to things finite and not to the Infinite, is therefore true in relation to the things you are able to perceive, and false in relation to the whole which you are unable to perceive."

Invaluable suggestions are offered to the student in the pages from which these extracts are taken without, it is hoped, affecting their context.

The Science of Being, as abstract truth, is founded upon the Unit—posits God as the only Unit, hence whole, changeless, indivisible; that uncreated First Cause from which all things come and to which they all go, which is Infinity.

Number, as the expression of the Unit, involves necessarily infinite variety. Figure as the representative of Number, as necessarily is related to this variety. The variety of natures within the one nature, or the numbers within Number, will have each its appropriate figure, this being the relation between visible and invisible.

Hence the true or accurate numeration of the visible is impossible except through perception of its relation to the invisible. Here modern science halts.

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By its own methods it is prevented from crossing this boundary line. The Science of Being crosses it successfully and produces the accurate numeration—that which is not only true in relation to the things seen, but demonstrably true also in relation to that whole which is not seen.

One of the greatest revelations, one even sublime, afforded by Balzac's theory of the straight line and the curve, is a fundamental truth to the appreciative student of this science.

"Your geometry," he says, "establishes that a straight line is the shortest way from one point to another, but your astronomy proves that God has proceeded by curves."

"Here, then, we find two truths equally proved by the same science—one by the testimony of your senses, reinforced by the telescope, the other by the testimony of your mind; and yet the one contradicts the other. . . . Who shall decide between rectilinear and curvilinear geometry—between the theory of the straight line and that of the curve? . . . The bullet which man aims direct proceeds by a curve, and when you wish to strike a certain point in space, you impel your bombshell along its cruel parabola. None of your men of science have drawn from this fact the simple deduction that the curve is the law of the material worlds and the straight line that of the Spiritual worlds; one is the theory of finite creations, the other the theory of the infinite. Man, who

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alone in this world has a knowledge of the Infinite, can alone know the straight line; he alone has a sense of verticality placed in a special organ. A fondness for the creations of the curve would seem to be, in certain men, an indication of the impurity of their nature, still conjoined to the material substances which engender us; and the love of great souls for the straight line seems to show in them an intuition of heaven. Between these two lines there is a gulf fixed like that between the finite and the infinite, between matter and spirit, between man and the idea, between motion and the object moved, between the creature and God. Ask Love, the divine, to grant you his wings and you can cross that gulf. Beyond it begins the revelation of the word."

After having reviewed the various esoteric and metaphysical doctrines of the nature and office of the circle, which make it the superior symbol, Mr. Parsons, in his introduction to "Seraphita," asks, in response to her statement that it is the inferior, "How shall this paradox be explained?" going on to affirm that "though the line may be regarded mathematically as the sign of infinite extension, it surely has little connection with Idealism, with Poetry, with Imagination, or Beauty, or Religion;" and he forms the conclusion that because "it has with Duty clear and close affiliations," here must be the explanation of the paradox; for "Duty lov'd of Love" is, he says, "the highest test of human aspiration, the surest measure of human progress."

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This paradox, however, which, as said before, offers one of the grandest revelations afforded by Balzac's philosophy to those who have eyes to see, has that more complete explanation which shows the straight line to have close connection "with Idealism, with Poetry, with Imagination, and Beauty, and Religion"; with all that lifts the human mind and heart from the circuitous route of prolonged experience as a means of knowledge, to the straight line of direct perception and intercourse possible to the individualized soul. Here lies the difference between the things of matter and the things of the spirit; the operations of the limited intellect that must follow the curve, and the illuminated understanding that can follow the straight line; the man of science whose results and rewards must accord with the limited faculties through which he finds them, and the true, rather than merely visionary, idealist who, following the straight line, gains all and more than the other and in advance of him; between, broadly, Science and Religion, between demonstrated and comparative, and that superlative truth which is the highest degree of the primal positive. Here is no paradox; all is divinely natural to the one who has found "the way."

It is the difference between that slow plodding discovery of abstract truth that attends natural human experience, and that divination that weds Religion to Science; that flies in the open firmament of the heaven straight to the heart and core, the essence

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of all things; that is the power of individuality as above the power of human authority; the power that has given to the world those great souls that have helped to lift it higher as it moved in the circle of intellectual limitation. It is the power that makes seers, prophets, geniuses, Saviors; the power that redeems from intellectual bondage and from fear; that makes of the unknowable, the known.

Though the head follow the curve, the heart, following the straight line, draws the soul straight to that fountain-head whence issues the breath of life. Breathing this breath, the soul, though in the world, knows itself as not of the world, but of the Absolute. Following the curve to find God, on this straight line the soul knows God. The straight line of individual relation to God must some time supersede for us that curve of human experience in which we wander blindly, roaming the while, feeling after deliverance from suffering, falling often and stumbling forward again as our pain spurs us on. Only as we live on the straight line are all the mysteries of the curve revealed to us; and we wed the knowledge gained through experiences to the illumination from the "Over Soul," making that whole which is true wisdom; and wisdom is always "justified of her children."

"Man," says Balzac, "is effect and cause. He is fed, but he feeds in turn. . . . Your science which makes you great in your own eyes is paltry indeed beside the light which bathes a seer. . . . The

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Path to God is in ourselves. The Seer and the Believer find eyes within their souls more piercing far than eyes that probe the things of earth. . . . Your noblest lights are clouds. Above is the sanctuary whence the true light flows."

In Seraphita's struggle with the "hosts of darkness," with "Species, Shapes, and devils," as David declares, is illustrated the same struggle and victory that is portrayed as Jesus' temptation in the wilderness and His crucifixion; it is the final rejection of all sense-allurements, the victory over their power to lead astray. That this battle must be waged and won alone is the absolute necessity for the soul that would ascend. David is powerless to help her, though she is his only treasure.

May there not be significance in his description of her as she fights it? "For the last five hours she has stood erect, her eyes raised to heaven, her arms extended; she cries to God."

This battle is fought on the straight line, not on the curve. All five senses, which belong to the curve, must be absorbed in the one—an all-compelling aspiration—the single eye, with an utter all-sufficient self-surrender, reliance only upon the Mighty One.

"The Light of God is defending her," said David.

"She is only saying her prayers," says Monsieur Becker, as he looks at her through the window.

Wilfrid is awed by what he vaguely perceives as he sees and listens to Seraphita—an awe that has

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disappeared the following day when the strength of his rational nature has resumed his activity. Breakfasting with Monsieur Becker, "by the time they had swallowed their fifth cup of tea," says Balzac, these philosophers had come to think that "the celestial truths to which they had listened were arguments susceptible of examination," and "Seraphita a charming, seductive, and eloquent girl."

"Bah," says the worthy pastor, "the final word of all these fine enigmas is six feet under ground."

Barabbas the robber is indeed released unto us when we reject the truth that would save us from his depredations.

Following the thread of continuity, we are prepared for the final scene where only Wilfrid and Minna are with Seraphita-Seraphitus at his death. The nature of this death is indicated by the time of the occurrence, the springtime, the bursting forth, from the covering which has hidden so long, of the green foliage, the buds and blossoms which smile upon the sunlight. It is the resurrection—the breaking of the divine soul from the trammels in which it has been begotten, but which are powerless to hold it longer, and its ascension to its eternal abode.

In the walk which they take together, Seraphita bids farewell to earth, even though it was never more beautiful than now. The heavenly wings are being plumed for flight. Standing in "this immensity of Nature," where the village was "a lost point in the

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landscape," she casts a last look "upon this nature in travail."

"Farewell, ye mariners, who seek the Orient through the thick darkness of your abstractions vast as principles! Farewell, ye martyrs of thought, led by thought into the presence of the True Light! I see the angelic choir, the wafting of perfumes, the incense of the heart of those who go their way consoling, praying, imparting celestial balm and living light to sufferings souls! Courage, ye choir of Love! you to whom the peoples cry, "Comfort us, defend us! To you courage! and farewell! Farewell, ye granite rocks that shall bloom a flower; farewell, flower that becomes a dove; farewell, dove that shall be woman; farewell, woman who art Suffering, man who art Belief! Farewell, you who shall be all love, all prayer."

What a mighty truth in the words, "Woman who art Suffering, man who art Belief!" Is it not by the union of Suffering and Belief that the world is filled with their progeny—all the evils attendant upon civilization without spiritualization? Is not suffering the woman, or the feeling, and belief the man, or rational limitation that keeps feeling in bondage to the senses? The soul must indeed say farewell to both, for it is destined to an existence they cannot enter. They are left below as the soul mounts higher.

The outward circumstance involving Seraphita's death is described by Balzac as "the progress of the

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spirit piercing the last obstacle between itself and the Infinite" that "was called an illness," the "hour of life" that "went by the name of death." The sense-soul goes down to death following its natural gravitation. Only by help of the inner eye which pierces the clouds that enshroud mortality can the soul lift itself up, dying through ascending beyond them.

And it is only the "He," the exterior, that disappears, because lifted up into the "She," the interior that is eternal. The divine, to the outer sense that can see only externals, following the curve, is necessarily "He"; but to the inner sense that sees the straight line of descent and ascent, it is "She"—the divine Love.

The supremacy of the Divine Will, of this Infinite, changeless Love, the utter abnegation of the human will that contains the element of selfishness, the "not mine but thine" that must obtain before the soul can become the seraph, and the higher than our educated view of Prayer, are beautifully told in Seraphita-Seraphitus' dying words, and in the revelation afforded Wilfrid and Minna by their own seership, or temporary lifting up above the things of matter and mortality.

"Prayer," he says, "issuing from so many trials, is the consummation of all truths, all powers, all feelings. Fruit of the laborious, progressive, continued development of natural properties and faculties vital-

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ized anew by the divine breath of the Word, prayer has occult activity. . . . We say no prayers—prayer forms within us; it is a faculty which acts of itself; it has attained a way of action which lifts it outside of forms; it links the soul to God. . . . When you possess the faculty of praying without weariness, with love, with force, with certainty, with intelligence, your spiritualized nature will presently be invested with power. Like a rushing wind, like a thunder-bolt, it cuts its way through all things and shows the power of God."

"With a prayer, He lifted himself up to die."

"Soul of all things, oh my God, thou whom I love for thyself! . . . receive a love which has no limit! . . . Take me that I no longer be myself! Am I not purified? then cast me back into the furnace. . . . Rejected, I will bless thy justice. But if excess of love may win in a moment that which hard and patient labor cannot attain, then bear me upward in thy chariot of fire. . . . if thou wilt, reject me! Thou art He who can do no evil!"

"The violence of that last prayer had burst her bonds."

"The aspiration of the soul toward heaven was so contagious that Wilfrid and Minna, beholding those radiant scintillations of Life, perceived not Death."

"The veil of flesh which until now had hidden that glory from their eyes, dissolved imperceptibly away, and left them free to behold the Divine substance."

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At this point in human experience analysis is exhausted. Working inward and backward through all fleshly veils, we come at last to the "Divine substance," fixed, imperishable, eternal, whose light has been the illumination of all dark valleys, the strength in all hours of weakness, the purpose as well as the beginning and end of time and existence. From the animal or sensuous quality to the human or intellectual, and from the intellectual through the spiritual to the divine, the soul has journeyed toward that Divine substance to which it belongs, leaving behind one by one the experiences and relationships pertaining to each, till the "last enemy" is overcome by the strength of its realized kinship with the Infinite. And this is the end and aim of human existence, the "return to origin" of the only species capable of *conscious* return; the established "dominion over all" which is potential in every soul clothed with human flesh; the destiny awaiting every son of man as he is born into the world.

Wonderful as is the continuity of meaning in these three books, masterly as is the manner in which it is wrought out, it is in Seraphita alone that the grander chords are struck to which our very inmost vibrates in unison. The book is noble in its conception and execution, but the last chapter—"The Assumption"—is sublime. All the way we have been before the gates of heaven, but here we are carried through them to the celestial sphere.

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No one, except he be deaf, dumb, and blind, in the prison of the senses, can read it without having his own aspiration kindled, his own soul lifted up in adoration for the Supreme Essence of all being. Tears fill the eyes, but they are not of pain. They are the falling dew of a mighty deathless love, that gathers in the soul as a pent-up force that will later burst all barriers; that compels us to see, hear, feel, think anew; that makes us long to be offered up a sacrifice if through us the world may be redeemed.

Strength and Love, the Wilfrid and Minna in ourselves, whose unity, whose co-operation, shall make us mediators between the human and the divine. We feel willing to forego all that has seemed so indispensable, so dear, and as we close the book we pray our own prayer—"My God, I thank Thee if I may be lifted up."

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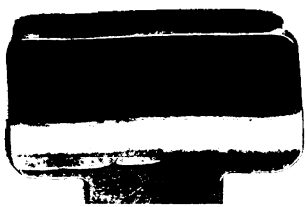

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